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THE INFLUENCE OF MARSHAL PILSUDSKI
on
POLAND'S POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT
(1926-1935)

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by

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PREFACE

Because of a lack of material on the subject of Poland between the First and Second World Wars, I have had to rely on second-hand material. This has led to the lack of space for the years 1914-1918, and other particulars. I found the book The Polish Republic by Robert Rothenberg most helpful and most objective. The majority of the facts on Poland and on Pilsudski were published before 1926.

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MAP OF POLAND BETWEEN THE WARS



CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Poland was divided into three sections, which struggled against each other politically in the years between the First and Second World Wars-- a thoroughly Western (Prussian), a semi-Western (Austrian), and a completely Eastern (Russian) area. The people in these three areas were subjected to various forces. In all, French cultural influence was strong but in particular in Congress Poland, which was under Russian domination. The principles of Democracy were learned from the French through French literature and through the Polish exiles in Paris. The methods of an efficient bureaucracy were learned from the Prussians.¹ It was only in the Prussian-ruled provinces that any kind of national front had been achieved by the Poles before 1918. This front had been achieved through securing their economic position by

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establishing co-operation for buying and selling with the Prussians. In the other two sections, under Russia and Austria, "the differences of class, economic principles and interests, of Right and Left theories of government, were fully developed." Therefore, the new Poland was composed of many groups, the leaders of which had never worked together, and who seemed to be more concerned with personal ambitions than with public interest.²

In Prussian Poland, all Polish opinion was in opposition to the Prussian government, but it never assumed revolutionary forms. Their opposition was hostile toward the German masters, but they were unable to agree upon any particular course to bring their national deliverance.³

¹ Hugh Seton-Watson, Eastern Europe Between the Wars (Cambridge at the University Press, 1946), pp. 73, 130.

² William John Rose, Poland Old and New (London, G. Bell, 1945), p. 9.

³ Bernadette Everly Schmitt (ed.), Poland, ("United Nations Series"; California: University of California Press, 1945), pp. 104-105.

CHAPTER I

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¹Hugh Seton-Watson, Eastern Europe Between the Wars (Cambridge at the University Press, 1946), pp. 73, 150.

²William John Rose, Poland Old and New (London, G. Bell, 1948), p. 9.

³Bernadotte Everly Schmitt (ed.), Poland, ("United Nations Series"; California; University of California Press, 1945), pp. 104-105.

In Russian Poland, the Poles lived under extreme political difficulties. They were even denied the expression allowed their fellow Poles under German rule. Even their press and language were suppressed by the Russians. Their only consolation lay in the fact that many of the Russians were treated likewise. The Poles learned from the Russian revolutionaries the method and mentality of Conspiracy and from the Narodniki, a students' movement to help the peasants, "the ideas of terrorism and of peasant revolution." The knowledge of Socialism and revolutionary ardour was acquired by the Social Democrats; the Pan-Slav ideas, and the idea of brotherly relations with Russia were acquired by some of the Polish intellectuals. But for the majority of the Poles, Russia was excluded from the idea of Slav brotherhood for the Poles considered themselves the great Slav nation to lead the others.⁴

The most political freedom was found in Austrian Poland. In Galicia, the Poles formed the upper class of gentry and were, therefore, allowed a political status unknown by the Poles in the Prussian and Russian sections. They were the possessors of the soil and were, therefore, thought of as a conservative, stabilizing force to the monarchy; they were mainly Catholic which made them additionally welcome to the monarchy in polygot Austria. But even more, the Poles did not remain against the government, for they found that for their support to the dynasty they could wrangle continuous concessions and maintain a free hand in Galicia. The Poles there developed into a bourgeois class of clever political manipulators. However, until 1907, the franchise was restricted and the parties that took shape were, therefore,

⁴Ibid. p. 105; Seton-Watson, op. cit., p. 73.

not composed of wide segments of the population. But after the great reform of 1907, which allowed universal suffrage for the elections to the Austrian Reichsrat, the parties became more nearly like the vote-getting parties in Europe and America. These parties functioned for the elections of 1907 and 1911, thus putting the Austrian Poles in a different position from those in Russia and Prussia by allowing them a certain degree of political expression and a chance to develop weapons for political combat.⁵

When the parties began to take shape in Poland, it was at a moment when Russia was almost entirely without influence politically, and when the Austro-German coalition was succeeding in its military endeavors. The Poles were able to exercise no power until the coalition of the two Powers had failed. Because of the weakness of the Great Powers surrounding Poland when she began to develop party policy, the Poles had a double illusion of power--that of the unusual setting of world problems, coupled with Poland's traditional legacy of discrete opinion. Because of no common medium through which the current of political life could flow, the three sections of Poland even developed divided public opinions. This division resulted from the subjection of the Poles to various regimes and also from the legacy of their stubborn individualism which handicapped a cohesive force.⁶ One could organize a party on a nationalist basis, but unless there was a further factor of common belief the party was usually unstable and short-lived. This problem was

⁵Ibid.; Schmitt, op. cit., pp. 106-107.

⁶Ibid., pp. 104, 109-110.

especially prevalent at the beginning of the twentieth century when the Poles wanted a free and united Poland. Once the fact was accomplished they had to turn to new policies in order to remain in existence.

Four major ideologies converged in the formation of parties into many various and peculiar combinations because no one ideology was monopolized by any one faction. The most powerful of these was nationalism which was apparent in all parties. The Christian tradition entered the scene as the second force, and in Poland that meant exclusively the Roman Catholic Church. Democracy was the third force whether it was political, economic, or social. The last force was Socialism.⁷

There were three main party groupings in the Parliaments which were elected from 1919 throughout the twenties. These were the National Democratic Party on the Right, the larger of the two Peasant Parties in the Center, and the Socialists and Liberation (smaller Peasant Party) on the Left. The Minority groups made up almost one-fifth of the deputies to the Sejm(diet). On a national issue the Center usually voted with the Right, thus making a majority, but on a social issue it usually voted with the Left, thus causing a deadlock. The Minority groups decided the question, and their vote was usually anti-Right, for the Right was intolerant toward the Minorities.⁸

The party of the Right, the National Democrats, was of the middle class, intensely nationalistic, socially Conservative, anti-Semitic, and strongly

⁷ Ibid., pp. 110-111.

⁸ William John Rose, The Growth of Polish Democracy, Printed for the Polish Publications Committee (Liverpool, London, and Prescott: C. Tinling and Company, Ltd., 1945.) pp. 16-17. This will be referred to in subsequent footnotes as GPD.

opposed to Pilsudski and his followers, for they considered Pilsudski too revolutionary and were shocked by his relations with Germany and Austria, which were to them much greater enemies than Russia.⁹

The Peasant Party which constituted the Center had its beginnings in the over-crowded areas of small holders in Galicia, a part of Russian Poland. They were always anti-Russian and became anti-Austrian after the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk by Russia and the Entente Powers. The leader of this party was Wincent Witos, a humbly-born but well-endowed man who had moderate views, was prepared to compromise with anyone, and was not insistent on quick changes, especially in land reforms.¹⁰

The Left was composed of Socialists and of the Liberation Party or left-wing peasantry. This group of peasantry had inherited from the Russian peasant movement the more radical views, and therefore, constantly pressed for revolutionary measures. They were not able for eleven years to reach a basis for unification with the Peasant Party in the restored Poland.¹¹

With the rise of industry in Poland in the nineteenth century, many Poles had turned to Marxian Socialism and had worked with the Russian Socialists. But Socialism became "national in sentiment" as well as in class, thus creating a desire among the Poles to urge action on patriotic grounds. The Polish Socialist Party, therefore split in two on the question of Polish

⁹Ibid., p. 9.

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 7-8; Seton-Watson, op. cit., pp. 160-161.

¹¹Ibid.; Rose, Poland. p. 8.

independence. Those favoring a patriotic revolutionary party were led by Josef Pilsudski. These patriotic Socialists considered Russia their number one enemy. There were a few intellectuals, Christian and Jewish, who led the other party, which was composed mainly of the working class. Both developed in Russian Poland, but were accepted by only a few in the Prussian and Austrian sectors.¹²

In addition to writing a constitution the new Sejm, elected in January, 1919, had the responsibility of reconciling the mixed populations from the border districts--Lithuanians, White Russians, Ukrainians, and Jews, and of establishing a legal code for a government which had no money in the treasury and no resources. Poland had been devastated by the war; the markets of industry and agriculture were disorganized by the new frontiers of Western and Central Europe and by the disappearance of Russia from World Trade; and the currency had depreciated catastrophically.¹³

Although the Constitution for Poland was finally voted on March 17, 1921, conditions in the Sejm were not good. A frame of mind had been produced by the thousand-year old struggle with Germany and Russia, which considered political compromise a form of national betrayal.¹⁴ They had learned to hate

¹²Ibid., pp. 6-7.

¹³Seton-Watson, op. cit., p. 101; Alexandra Pilsudska, Pilsudski, Printed for the United States by the Vail Ballou, Inc. (Binghamton, N. Y.: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1941), pp. 286-287.

¹⁴Edward J. Rozek, Allied Wartime Diplomacy (New York: Wiley Press, 1958), p. 8.

governments as a result of their repression by them. Furthermore, they had always been oppositionists in the foreign governments. Opposition in the Sejm, therefore, was not generally loyal and often allowed politics to become involved with the dislike of certain personalities.¹⁵ Politics thus began to revolve around two points:

1. The antipathy of the National Democrats to Josef Pilsudski.
2. "The tendency of the Witos Peasant Group to think in terms of nationalism rather than of class or state."

This last point meant that the Peasant Group, hoping the National Democrats would renounce their opposition to needed agrarian reforms, tended to ally themselves with that group instead of working with the socialists-labor groups and the Minorities "on the democratic foundations laid down in the Constitution."¹⁶

The Constitution adopted was based more on the French model than on the American. A new upper house, the Senate, was created, but the Sejm still retained the major power. The authority of the President was strictly limited.¹⁷

These decisions were founded not so much on principle as on the determination of the Right, the National Democrats, to reduce the power of Pilsudski, for all felt that he would be elected President.¹⁸ Pilsudski strongly disapproved

¹⁵Eric J. Patterson, Pilsudski, Marshal of Poland (Great Britain: J. W. Arrowsmith, Ltd., 1935), pp. 86-87; Rose, Poland, pp. 17-18.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 9-10.

¹⁷Seton-Watson, op. cit., p. 161

¹⁸Robert Machray, "Pilsudski, the Strong Man of Poland." Current History, XXXIII (November, 1930), 197.

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of the limited power of the executive and declared that he would not run for the Presidency.

Conditions continued to remain in disorder throughout the years from 1922, to 1926. The increasing rivalry among the Parties in the Sejm made it difficult to form a definite majority in Parliament. It also caused the fast change of Governments. From March, 1921, to May, 1926, there were fourteen different Governments, the most successful being that of Laszlas Grabski, who was Prime Minister from December, 1923, until November, 1925.¹⁹

¹⁹Raymond Leslie Buell, Poland: Key to Europe (2nd edition revised; New York and London: A. A. Knopf, 1939), p. 89; Oscar Halecki, "Contemporary Poland," A Handbook of Slavic Studies, ed. Lenoid I. Strakhovsky (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1949), pp. 567-569.

an internationally known liberal. The new Government received the confidence of the Sejm. But in April, 1926, the two Socialist Ministers of the grand coalition resigned because they were not in agreement with the Government plans for reforms of taxes and salaries in order to increase the revenue and reduce the expenditure. The Government remained in office at the request of President Wojciechowski, an early friend and co-worker of Pilsudski, until the budget for 1926-27 was voted. On May 5, Skrzynski, in agreement with the rest of the Cabinet, resigned. In a statement he said that the Government had resigned "because the basis of the coalition had contracted;" it had not fallen.¹

The resignation of Skrzynski after voting the Budget for May was actually a necessity, for it was no longer supported by the Sejm. After his resignation, President Wojciechowski negotiated for five days with party chiefs; then he asked Vincent Witos, the leader of the Polish Peasant Party, to form a new Government. On May 10, Witos succeeded in forming a coalition of the Right

¹Ibid., pp. 275, 211-213.

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THE COUP D'ETAT OF 1926

By the beginning of May, 1926, conditions in the free Poland had reached a critical period. The political and economic situations had caused serious problems for the country. The Government, under the Premiership of Ladislas Grabski, a Polish economist, was losing the confidence of the Polish nation, because the Polish Sejm was racked with "corruption, bribery, and wrangling of affairs and post in and under the administration, and concession hunting." On November 13, the Grabski Government was forced to resign on a vote of non-confidence in the Sejm. A new Government composed of a large coalition of parties was then created on November 20, 1925, by Count Alexander Skrzynski, an internationally known Liberal. The new Government received the confidence of the Sejm. But in April, 1926, the two Socialist Ministers of the grand coalition resigned because they were not in agreement with the Government plans for reforms of taxes and salaries in order to increase the revenue and reduce the expenditure. The Government remained in office at the request of President Wojciechowski, an early friend and co-worker of Pilsudski, until the budget for 1926-27 was voted. On May 5, Skrzynski, in agreement with the rest of the Cabinet, resigned. In a statement he said that the Government had resigned "because the basis of the coalition had contracted;" it had not fallen.¹

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¹Ibid., pp. 205, 211-213.

and Center parties. The Left, however, wanted a dissolution of Parliament. Witos made a great mistake by appointing General Julius Malczewski, an enemy of Pilsudski, as Minister of War without consulting Pilsudski. Although he was still in retirement, Pilsudski was influential with the army and no appointments were usually made without his consent.²

Earlier, during the Skrzynski Government, the question had come up of Pilsudski's possible return to the Government as Minister of War. A law had been drafted while General Ladislas Sikorski was Minister of War in 1924-25 which seemed to limit the power of the Commander-in-Chief of the army, particularly in time of war. Pilsudski demanded that this draft be withdrawn as a condition of his return to the Army. The draft was withdrawn during the Skrzynski Government, largely through the efforts of General Lucian Zeligowski, a friend of Pilsudski and Minister of War. He also substituted for it a new proposal, which in many respects embodied Pilsudski's views. In it, though the President was the highest authority in war, his war minister was to serve as his chief aide and was not to be responsible to the Sejm. The Inspector-General was to ^{be} the chief aide of the War Minister in times of peace and was to be responsible to the General Staff. Following this action, Zeligowski resigned in order to make way for Pilsudski. But the next day the Government fell, and Witos was asked to form a Government, to which he appointed Malczewski as Minister of War. Such a move indicated a purging of the army of Pilsudski's friends. Pilsudski was horrified by this action, for he regarded himself as the leader in the liberation of Poland and the

²Ibid., p. 213, W. F. Reddaway, Marshal Pilsudski (London: George Routledge and Sons, Ltd., 1939), pp. 224-226, Rose, Poland, p. 15.

creator of the Army of Poland.³ Furthermore, the coalition was the same type which had driven Pilsudski to resign from political life in 1923.

The coalition of the Right and Center was associated with the assassination in 1922 of the newly elected President Gabriel Narutowicz, a Liberal and a friend of Pilsudski, who was assassinated just two weeks after his election by a member of the Right. When the coalition came into power shortly after the assassination, Pilsudski resigned as Minister of War and retired from political life altogether, saying that he would not serve under such corrupt people. There were many others who also objected to the coalition. "The wage-earners and the Left were their natural political foes. The middle classes, and industrialists in particular, feared them for their bad record in finance. Pilsudski and his followers scorned them as corrupters of the army."⁴

The economic problems began to pile up in July, 1925, when Grabski was Prime Minister. Depression had begun as a result of the fall of the zloty, the standard money set up by Grabski, also the Finance Minister, in 1924, on a par with the Swiss franc. After the Grabski Ministry fell and the Skrzynski Government came to power, Georges Zdziechowski, the new Finance Minister, addressed the Sejm on the financial situation in a speech in which he was not at all pessimistic. But a true estimate of the situation was revealed by the fact that "farmers and peasants were allowed to pay their taxes in grain and other agricultural produce."⁵

³Ibid., p. 224, Machray, op. cit., pp. 207-208, 213.

⁴W. F. Reddaway, et al, The Cambridge History of Poland, (Cambridge: University Press, 1941), pp. 597-598. This will be referred to as CHP.

⁵Machray, op. cit., pp. 205-206; Rose, Poland, p. 15.

At the beginning of 1926, the situation became more hopeful as the zloty began to rise. However, the rise did not continue because the deficit for that year exceeded the Treasury notes and small coins issued to cover it. Furthermore, the Right and Left in the Government had worked out a compromise for an Agrarian Reform Act. The act restricted the distribution of estates as laid down by an earlier act in 1920 and also extended the acreage which a landowner could retain. No one was pleased with the compromise, but it was workable. Although conditions momentarily seemed better both financially and politically, the improvement did not continue throughout the year.⁶

A scheme along the Socialist lines was drawn up by the two Socialist Ministers in the coalition Government: the State was to give large sums monthly for the aid of the unemployed and in support of the industrial life of the country; the bank of Poland was to issue notes against the deposit of gold and silver articles; the salaries of the workers were to be raised to the level of the previous year; and the balancing of the Budget was to be secured by increased taxation. The program which the Government drew up, however, had an addition of ten per cent to all taxes, whether direct or indirect, with a readjustment downward of the salaries of workers, thus increasing the revenue and reducing the expenditure. Therefore, the two Socialist Ministers withdrew from the Government and the Socialist Party withdrew from the grand coalition. The resignation of the Socialists in April and the fall of the Government in May gave fresh impetus to the fall of the zloty and the deepening of the depression.⁷

⁶Machray, op. cit., pp. 206-207.

⁷Ibid., pp. 211-213.

After Skazynski resigned and Witos became Prime Minister, there were again symptoms of industrial and commercial panic as capital was carried out of the country, and the exchange again fell. There were also bankruptcies and suspensions of payments.⁸

A rumor spread throughout Warsaw on the night of May 10-11 that shots had been fired at Pilsudski's house at Sulejowek. Pilsudski was declared by his supporters to be the Saviour of the country; they forced the orchestras in the cafes to play the march of Pilsudski's Legions, and hung posters declaring their faith in Pilsudski on the walls of the cafes. Riots broke out in many parts of the city in protest against the Government. Many of the demonstrators were officers in uniform or men wearing ex-service badges. The Press also reacted violently to the Witos Government and in the Kurjer Poranny, the leading newspaper in Warsaw, on May 11, there was an interview of Pilsudski's in which he accused the Witos Government of corruption, and he further stated that: "I do not regard the crisis as terminated. I enter on the struggle against the evil that corrodes the state, against parties without restraint, on the look-out for personal profits and forgetful of the general interest." The issue of the Kurjer Poranny was confiscated by the Government, but the attack by the Press continued and feeling ran high in Warsaw.⁹

Pilsudski probably did not expect President Wojciechowski to show any resistance to his actions, but in this he was mistaken. It was President

⁸GHP, p. 598.

⁹Machray. op. cit., 214; Patterson, op. cit., pp. 113-114.

Wojciechowski who had the paper confiscated, and he also dispersed the demonstrators with the police. Several regiments had collected in the neighborhood of Warsaw for maneuvers, but now Malzewski cancelled them. Some of the troops then declared for Pilsudski and marched on Warsaw on May 11, led by Pilsudski's friend General Dreger, and under the control of General Zeligowski who had been Minister of War in the Skrzynski Government.¹⁰

Pilsudski's next move is a mystery to all historians. He probably intended more than a peaceful demonstration. Whatever his intention, it resulted in the coup d'etat of May, 1926, which met with little resistance from the Poles. Demonstrations of Pilsudski and the troops marching on Warsaw were to take place on May 12.¹¹ On the afternoon of May 12, Pilsudski and his troops reached the right bank of the Vistula and occupied Praga, a suburb of Warsaw. Pilsudski's men took possession of the heads of the bridges,

¹⁰GHP, pp. 598-599.

¹¹Madame Pilsudska wrote in her biography, Pilsudski, that Pilsudski agreed to lead a demonstration with the troops against the Witos Government, thus hoping to force to make some reforms, at least in the case of the army which he felt the politicians were making the sport of their politics. He wanted the army removed from their influence. The Cambridge History of Poland asserted that Pilsudski probably thought that their military action would shake the Government down and that President Wojciechowski would then summon a Government of Pilsudski's friends. William Rose in Poland Old and New suggested that Pilsudski was persuaded by friends to resort to military action. Seton-Watson in Eastern Europe Between the Wars thought it was all Pilsudski's idea.

The Kierbedza and the Poniatowski, across the Vistula into Warsaw. "By crossing the Vistula he had outflanked his enemy and bought himself unopposed to the back-door, as it were, of Warsaw, and by his success in seizing the bridgeheads he kept the back-door open to him as soon as he cared to enter."¹²

President Wojciechowski, who was summoned from his summer residence at Spala, met Pilsudski on the Poniatowski Bridge. He had been an old friend of Pilsudski before the restoration of Poland, but several events, primarily the episode concerning Sikorski's plans for changes in the army had caused strife between him and Pilsudski. He now told Pilsudski that the Government would defend the Constitution and not yield to rebellion, to which Pilsudski replied that if the Witos Government would be dismissed he would see what could be arranged. It is to Wojciechowski's credit that he stood firm and remained faithful to his oath as President by refusing to back down. "It was his misfortune, not his fault, that to set aright disjointed time, it was necessary to act against the laws."¹³ The President then withdrew to organize his defense.

In a last effort to end the struggle constitutionally, Pilsudski's followers in the Witos Government announced their secession from the Government and asked the President to form a new one. The President again refused to submit. He had gone to the Radeziwill Palace where the Cabinet was in session after he left the Poniatowski Bridge. He exhorted them to do their duty; martial law was declared and the Government decided to resist at all costs. General

¹² CHP, 599.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 599-560.

Rozwadowski, an opponent of Pilsudski, who was put in charge of the Government forces, first tried to get possession of the bridgeheads which had given Pilsudski a strategic advantage. Fighting began on the evening of May 12. Pilsudski repulsed the attack of Rozwadowski and with his troops marched to the center of the city. The Government fled to the Belvedere Palace, the home of the President; their offices were occupied by Pilsudskists, while fighting broke out in the streets.¹⁴

On the following day, May 13, there were further efforts at mediation but these failed. The fighting was renewed. The Government received some reinforcements with which it counterattacked from the direction of the Belvedere and began to push the Pilsudskists back. But "now that mass of moderate opinion which is the true arbiter of revolution began to show which side it was on."¹⁵ The citadel troops, with their officers, joined the Marshal's side en masse. The railwaymen refused to work the lines bringing up more Government troops, but worked eagerly to bring those of Pilsudski, in particular those troops from Vilna led by General Rydz-Smigly, a friend of Pilsudski. This action decided the day. "The Government forces were counterattacked in their turn and driven back on the Belvedere, the fighting in the streets costing upwards of 237 killed and 1,000 wounded, but most of the casualties occurred among the civilians, who took no part in the struggle except as onlookers."¹⁶

¹⁴Machray, op. cit., p. 215.

¹⁵GHP, p. 600.

¹⁶Machray, op. cit., p. 216.

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The majority of the city favored Pilsudski.¹⁷

On the morning of May 14, a general attack through the streets was launched by Pilsudski. President Wojciechowski and the Cabinet fled from the Belvedere after hearing that the situation was desperate. They fled to Wilanow, about eight miles from Warsaw. Pilsudski surrounded the Belvedere by five o'clock. Government troops began to arrive from Pomerania, but it was too late. President Wojciechowski and the Government decided to abandon the struggle. The President resigned his position, which according to the Constitution, now went to Matthais Rataj, the Speaker of the Sejm. Rataj was sent for by Wojciechowski. He was given three sheets of paper which contained the resignation of the President, the resignation of the Government, and the minutes of their last meeting. By directing Rataj to assume the office of Presidency, Wojciechowski had thus enabled the victors to legalize their position with the least possible damage to the sanctity of the law. Rataj returned to the Belvedere Palace and accepted the Presidency ad interim. An armistice was concluded between the troops; the coup d'etat of May, 1926, was over.¹⁸

¹⁷The Cambridge History of Poland recorded that the Government had Warsaw bombed from the air, which further aided the feeling against the Government, but no other account could be found of the bombing.

¹⁸Machray, op. cit., pp. 216-217

CHAPTER III

PILSUDSKI - HIS CAREER TO 1926

Pilsudski ruled Poland for the next nine years until his death in 1935. Part of the time he ruled openly and part of the time from behind the scenes. He was twice Prime Minister, and always War Minister and Inspector-General. His nominees were placed in all the strategic positions of the Polish nation, political, economic, and international. Although he was Cabinet Minister he rarely attended Cabinet meetings, but his prestige upheld the Government and the Constitution. He never sought the lime light and was one of the hardest men in Europe to interview.¹ But before the years from 1926 to 1935 are analyzed, it would be helpful to cover the background of this main force in Poland's political development after 1926. After 1926, the history of Poland becomes intertwined with the history of Pilsudski.

Josef Pilsudski was born on December 5, 1867, at Zulow in the neighborhood of Wilno, in the old Grand Duchy of Lithuania. From 1386 until the third partition of Poland in 1795, Lithuania had been united with Poland. Pilsudski was the fourth of the twelve children of Josef and Maria Pilsudski, who were both descendants of noble families of Lithuania. But it is to Pilsudski's mother that most credit has been given for the beginning of his patriotic feeling towards Poland. Maria

¹Patterson, op. cit., pp. 118-119; Seton-Watson, op. cit., p. 163.

Pilsudski had been an active worker in the 1863 insurrection in Russian Poland just four years before Pilsudski was born.²

She [Pilsudski's mother] was a remarkable woman, and her son has given us a picture of the influence which she exercised over her children. A gentle spirit was united in her with a burning patriotism and love of Poland. She knew the national literature, and feeling its fire, she could communicate the depth of its message to her children. And here too she was no doubt aided by the circumstances of the time. For those were the days when Russification was the policy of the alien Government, and when therefore even devotion to great Polish literature might be a moth of suspicion It was a period when a sense of the danger of the unexpected added resolution as to the future, and when mothers, in spite of everything still dedicated their sons to their country's destiny.³

On July 4, 1874, there was a fire at the Pilsudski farm in Zulow which destroyed most of the Pilsudski fortune. The family therefore moved to Wilno in which there were more educational opportunities for Josef Pilsudski, although the education was under "a Tussian system of culture, ruthless in outlook and application." Therefore, Pilsudski was taught by his mother to hate oppression and to try to aid the deiverance of his people from alien rule.⁴

Pilsudski's mother died in 1884. From that time on, he was more or less on his own. After his graduation form the Wilno gymnasium in 1885, he went to the University of Kharkov in the Ukraine to study medicine. But

²Patterson, op. cit., pp. 1-23.

³Ibid., pp. 23-24.

⁴Ibid., p. 25.

in 1867, Pilsudski was arrested for alleged participation in an attempt to assassinate the Russian Tsar Alexander III. He was then turned loose, but was called as a witness at the trial. Although innocent, Pilsudski was sentenced to five years of exile in Siberia.

While in Siberia, Pilsudski met Bronislaw Szwarc, a member of the former national committee largely responsible for the Polish insurrection in 1863. Though he had been in Siberia many years his enthusiasm for a free Poland still remained. He still dreamed of an armed insurrection of the Polish nation. In addition to Szwarc, Pilsudski was also able to watch and to get to know some of the Russian revolutionaries who, like himself, were victims of Tsarist repression.⁵ "They were possible allies. Yet he seems to have got the impression that like the Tsarists many of the anti-Tsarists were at heart imperialists, bound to a belief that was going to have its influence on his political policy."⁶

Pilsudski's experience in Siberia did provide two advantages for him. It provided leisure time for him to reflect upon the past and plan for the future, avoiding the mistakes of the past. He thought the insurrection of 1863 had failed because of inadequate military preparation and because of the failure of the entire nation to rise. One had to approach the nation through the masses. He found the solution for reaching them, educating them, arming and drilling them in socialism "not as a military instrument in itself, because its class program for economic betterment precluded sacrifice for national ideals, but as a springboard from which to reach wider masses

⁵Ibid., pp. 25-36.

⁶Ibid., p. 37.

to whom his own 'romantic' program of armed struggle for national independence would appeal." Socialism was not even a means to an end, but a means to a better means. Pilsudski's Siberian experience also became a valuable passport in his career in later time as an agitator and a revolutionary. He was able to approach the masses with a badge of authority, calling himself a victim of the Tsarist regime.⁷

Upon his return to Wilno from Siberia in 1892, Pilsudski turned to the workers and peasants and to the Polish Socialist Party as an organization in which to unite these people. He maintained that as Socialists they might work for a Socialist Poland, but that dispensing with the Polish bourgeoisie should not be included in the program. He was romantic idealist, but in his methods he was a realist. It has already been stated that he considered socialism only a means. He was a Polish patriot, not an internationalist as Marx was. Furthermore, much of his idealism was foreign to the very being of the fight over the economic question, which was the basis of the fight of Socialism.⁸

The first issue of the party paper and its official organ, The Robotnik or Worker, of which Pilsudski became the editor, business manager, and chief printer, appeared on July 12, 1894. In 1896, he moved the press from Wilno to Lodz. It was not until February 21, 1900, that the press was discovered and Pilsudski was caught. He was placed in the Tenth Pavilion of the Citadel of Warsaw, from which there was believed to be no escape. Through secret

⁷ Stephen P. Mizwa, "Jozef Pilsudski," Great Men and Women of Poland, ed. by Stephen P. Mizwa (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1941), 346.

⁸ Patterson, op. cit., pp. 37-38.

negotiations with the members of the Party by means of an old Russian prison warder, plans were made for Pilsudski to feign insanity in order to be moved from the prison. After being examined by a doctor who knew immediately that it was feigned, but who befriended Pilsudski by saying that he must be moved from the Tenth Pavilion, Pilsudski was sent to a military hospital in Petrograd. From there he escaped with the aid of a Polish Socialist who had joined the staff at the hospital especially for that purpose. Eighteen months had elapsed since his arrest.⁹

After his escape, Pilsudski went to Cracow in the Austrian part of Poland, a section in which socialism was allowed to develop freely. From there he could slip over the Russian border when necessary in order to keep in touch with activities there. Near the end of 1901, Pilsudski went to London where most of the Polish exiles had established their headquarters. But in the spring of 1902, he returned to Cracow and became the acknowledged head of the whole revolutionary movement.¹⁰

Within the ranks of Poles and Socialists, divisions had begun to crop up both as to policy and method. As repression by authority became more brutal, efforts became more frantic, and mutual misunderstandings grew up as a result. There was disagreement between the Socialists who pursued the national aim and those who were essentially internationalists. "It was as understandable that Poles, separated by their respective readings of history, the fatal partitions and class differences, should not see eye to eye as to

⁹Ibid., pp. 40-50.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 50.

the method to be pursued to right the wrong done to their unhappy country."¹¹

When the war between Japan and Russia^{broke} out in 1904, Pilsudski planned to have the Poles resist at home rather than fight for Russia. But many of the Poles, especially the National Democrats, refused to follow him. Pilsudski then went to Japan, hoping to obtain assistance from her Government for an insurrection in Poland. The representative of the National Democrats, Roman Dmowski who was already there, persuaded the Japanese not to follow Pilsudski's plans; Pilsudski's endeavor to seek Japanese help was lost. The personal bitterness felt between Pilsudski and Dmowski because of rivalry for Polish support was strengthened by this incident. Dmowski was against Pilsudski's war measures and plan of direct action. He was a realist who preferred to work through appeasement for the gradual gaining of advantages and, for that reason, was willing to pay almost any price for collaboration with Russia. As the years passed, however, their individual policies began to show fewer and fewer differences. Indeed, it has been said that each man was right from his point of view; that both made direct contributions to Poland; and that the work of one was complementary to the work of the other.¹²

Meanwhile, in Russian Poland disorder had spread. The authorities had declared a state of seige because of the seriousness of conditions. Under these circumstances, Pilsudski set himself to make use of the situation by creating an armed force to fight the Russian Government. He formed the militant organization of his party, the Bojowka. Its purpose was guerilla warfare. It was at this point that Pilsudski's followers separated from the

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 50-51.

¹² Machray, op. cit., p. 32; Reddaway, op. cit., p. 112; Rose, GPD, pp. 8-9; Seton-Watson, op. Cit., pp. 159-160.

Polish Socialists. The purpose of the new organization formed by the Pilsudskists was to preserve the idea of an armed movement of Poland against Russia, which, he said, would have completely submerged without it. Its foremost ideal was Polish independence.¹³

One of the members of Pilsudski's party, Ignacy Daszynski, who was later to become important in Polish history, said of him:

Two traits in his character gained him our love--his kindness and his objectivity. Infinitely patient, he could pardon even after severe wrong actions. He could bring together by his friendly spirit people who dislike one another. Devoted to a work which appeared at that time almost desperate, living for years a life of poverty, Pilsudski was for us the most beautiful type of Polish saint who hopes for the victory against all hopes. His contempt for death gave him power.¹⁴

Following the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austria-Hungary in 1908, Europe began forming into two camps as Austria-Hungary and Russia faced each other anxiously. Many statesmen declared openly that the state of affairs was the best guarantee of peace, but others felt differently. Among the latter was Pilsudski who felt it was only a question of time until any small incident might cause the outbreak of war. It was his intention to use such an occasion, when it came, for the benefit of Poland.¹⁵

In 1908, Pilsudski formed a secret military organization, the Union for Active Struggle, (Z. W. G.), which was to give definite training to military recruits. In 1910, the organization was recognized by the Austrian Government as a legal institution along with a non-Socialist but kindred Polish organization. These two, on the outbreak of war, joined together. Pilsudski had moved from the idea of guerilla warfare to the "idea of interfering in

¹³Patterson, op. cit., pp. 51-53.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 55-56.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 56.

a possible revolution as a military formation," and then to the idea of a chance of going as a Polish army in a European War. "The idea seemed at the time to be merely fantastic. Yet, history has justified its boldness. The Polish army was born before the Polish state, and indeed became the creator of that state, but of the secret military groups came the riflemen and the legion; and from that in course of time the Polish army."¹⁶

Afraid that his original program of Polish independence would be overlooked in the alliance with Austria, Pilsudski formed in 1914, the Polish Military Organization (P. O. W.). Its purpose was to reach the populace of Russian Poland and "to unite it in the military effort which was still confined only to a section of the nation."¹⁷ In the same year, Pilsudski delivered a lecture to the Geographical Society at Paris in which he said:

The problem of the independence of Poland will be definitely solved only in the case when Russia will be beaten by Germany and Germany by France. It is our duty to lend our help to that aim; otherwise we shall have to pursue a very long and almost desperate struggle.¹⁸

This was a strange prophetic statement of what actually was to happen. Later, in 1922, in a speech at Cracow, he said:

I saw immediately that the only country where it was possible to begin and carry through such work was Austria. I reckoned that Germany, with her iron state organization and her machines, would at once put in everyone capable of fighting. Russia was no use; she was too confident in her own strength and her policy of force in dealing with her subjects. Austria remained the weakest state, maintaining herself alive as the type of political tight-rope walker, dependent on her subjects, the easiest to talk to even if it was Austrian talk.¹⁹

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 57-58.

¹⁷Pilsudski, op. cit., p. 224.

¹⁸Mizwa, op. cit., p. 351; Patterson, op. cit., p. 61.

¹⁹Ibid.

Pilsudski was for Poland and Poland alone. He might become an ally of Austria, but he would never become an Austrian slave. Respect for Poland had to be won through deeds and iron discipline, not through words. In this way also, patriotism would be rekindled, and the apathy of the Polish people, a reaction from the insurrection of 1863, would be wiped out.²⁰

When the war began, Pilsudski led his Legions into Russian Poland to fight. The Legions, who met with occasional successes, had a much more important psychological importance than any real importance as a result of its fighting, for in the war millions were pitted against each other. "The Polish Legion was a symbol of the Polish Army, the first army since the insurrection of 1863, composed of Poles, fighting on Polish soil. Based on a Polish Romantic tradition it was a demonstrable expression of the belief of a group of Poles that the mighty Russian Army was not invincible."²¹

By the end of 1915, two-thirds of the Polish territory was under German occupation and was ruled from Warsaw by a Central Civic Committee. As the year 1916 progressed, the Central Powers began to need more troops. In a bid for popularity for the purpose of trying to obtain needed troops from the Poles, the Central Powers on November 5, 1916, declared Poland an independent state. But a week later the announcement was made that

²⁰Ibid., p. 62.

²¹Mizwa, op. cit., p. 352.

"the Central Powers would continue temporarily to administer the affairs of the new Polish state."²² The announcement also asked for Polish soldiers. The reaction of the Poles to this proposal was that only a Polish Government could order the Poles to go to war. Pilsudski in a letter to the Rector of the University of Warsaw stated the general feeling of the nation:

If my own government ordered me in time of war to clean boots I would do it without hesitation; if it told me to enlist in an army of Cingalese I would obey. But on the other hand, since we have no government of our own, I say without reserve that if I were to go to war it would be to obtain one for us.²³

As a result of the reaction of the Poles, the Central Powers set up a Provisional Council of State for Poland, which met for the first time on January 14, 1917. Pilsudski was declared a member and was given the Army portfolio.

But Poland's independence still existed in name only. The Provisional Council of State was permitted to pass no measure until General von Beseler, the German Governor-General at Warsaw, had approved it. Germany also had a firm hold on the helm of State and armies of occupation were spread far and wide over Poland. Whether or not Pilsudski was deceived by the gift of independence for Poland, as were other patriots, would be difficult to decide. It would seem that he probably was not; that he saw it only as a possible means to further attainment of independence.²⁴

²²Pilsudska, op. cit., pp. 253-254.

²³Ibid., p. 254.

²⁴Madame Pilsudska stated that Pilsudski did not share the illusions of other patriots; that he recognized the flimsy structure of the newly-created state, and saw that Germany was fostering the state for her own ends. By accepting the situation and making the best of it, it might be possible to change the fiction to fact. p. 257. Other biographers of Pilsudski tend to agree with this although they are not as emphatic in their statements as Madame Pilsudska.

As a result of pressure from Berlin, General von Beseler pressed the Provisional Council of State to call upon the Polish Army to fight under German High Command wherever required. Therefore, on June 17, the Polish Military Organization withdrew from the Council of State. Except for one brigade, the Legions refused to take the oath which would have bound them to obedience to the German Emperor. Their action was a result of Pilsudski's decision to resign from the Provisional Council of State when the demand for obedience was made by von Beseler.

After his resignation, Pilsudski was arrested in July, 1917, by the Germans and imprisoned in the fortress of Magdeburg. He had entrusted his command of the army shortly before to General Rydz-Smigly in anticipation of his arrest. The Council of State itself resigned in August of that year. A Regency Council appointed by the Emperors of Austria-Hungary and Germany was set up in its place. As the situation became tenser during the year 1918, it was found necessary to make more changes. The Council of State, a type of Parliament set up by the Regency Council, was dissolved. A Cabinet was formed in October representing the three sections of Poland with the Ministry of War being reserved for Pilsudski, who was still in prison. On November 3, the Cabinet declared Poland a republic, at which time it was dismissed by the Regents and replaced by a provisional administration of functionaries.

The fall of the Central Powers even created greater confusion in Poland. The Regents tried to form a Government on November 10. On the 11th of November, Pilsudski arrived in Warsaw after having been released from prison, and the supreme command of the Polish Army was put in his hands by the Regency Council. This still was not enough. On November 14, the Regency

Council resigned and transferred its full powers to Pilsudski until a National Government could be formed.²⁵

With the powers conferred upon him by the Regency Council, Pilsudski became virtual dictator of Poland. "Without the use of force, without firing a shot, without even so much as asking for it, he became a dictator. Pilsudski the revolutionary created a Polish Army before there was a Polish State, and then Pilsudski the dictator started to create a democratic government."²⁶ In a statement Pilsudski declared himself temporary Chief of State until a Sejm (diet) could be assembled. Pilsudski was in a dangerous position, for the nation was widely divided in politics. Three separate governing bodies had been set up - one in Posen, another in Lublin, and another in Cracow. Pilsudski, realizing that the danger of party strife at such a time when powers from without were threatening the existence of the state, when an army had to be formed as quickly as possible, and when an economic system had to be created, could be detrimental to Poland, summoned the representatives of all parties together in an effort to reconcile them and form a National Government. A Government was then set up under the premiership of a Socialist, Ignacy Daszynski, who had been President of the Lublin Government. This was simply a measure to meet the need for legislation until the creation of a Legislative Assembly. However, Daszynski's Government failed immediately.²⁷ But the situation was even more complicated by a Polish National Committee, which had been set up in Paris. The Polish National Committee was predominated by the National Democrats and had been

²⁵Machray, op. cit., pp. 58-70.

²⁶Mizwa, op. cit., p. 356.

²⁷Machray, op. cit., pp. 73-74; Pilsudska, op. cit., p. 276.

recognized by the Allied Powers in 1917 as the "official Polish organization." It was led by the Conservative Russophile Roman Dmowski, and it was to this Government that the Right turned as a result of opposition from the Left supported by the Peasant Party.

After the fall of the Daszynski Government, the formation of a Government was entrusted to a more moderate man, Andrew Moraczewski, a Galacian Socialist, and his Government succeeded. A democratic electoral law was then set up, which made the franchise equal, direct, secret, for all sexes over twenty-one, and based on the system of proportional representation. The date of election for a Constituent Sejm was set for January 26, 1919. In the meantime, Pilsudski had notified all belligerents and neutrals of the existence of an independent Polish State, which united all Polish territories. He also asked the French to send the Polish troops that formed part of the French Army to Poland.

The French, after conferring with Dmowski, decided to take no heed of Pilsudski's announcement or of his request. Negotiations were then begun by Pilsudski and Dmowski, mainly because both wanted to present a united front at the Paris Peace Conference. But neither man was willing to give in. At this time, Ignacy Jan Paderewski came to Europe to see both Dmowski and Pilsudski, and it was with his assistance and mediation that a solution was finally found.²⁸

²⁸There are various accounts of Paderewski's contribution to the formation of the Polish state, some giving him more credit than others. Both W. F. Reddaway and Madame Pilsudska give all credit to Pilsudski. Seton-Watson gives the credit to Paderewski. The account by Machray which I have used seems more objective than the others and gives both men credit for the compromise that was made.

As a result of the excessive demands of each party, it was impossible to constitute a Government composed of representatives of all parties. Moraczewski resigned, and it was, therefore, agreed to form a Government of independent personages who represented the three sections of Poland. Ten members of the Left were added to the National Committee in Paris to represent Poland in the Peace Conference. Paderewski became Premier of the new Government, which was recognized by the National Committee, and the National Committee, in turn, was recognized as representing Poland's interests at the Peace Conference. Dmowski and Paderewski were the two official delegates to the Conference. Pilsudski and his Government were then recognized by the Allied Powers.

Except for the unsettled boundaries, conditions were in order for the election of the Constituent Sejm. Elections were held in the former Austro-German territories and in Western Galicia. On February 10, 1919, the First Sejm opened.²⁹ "The Sejm was composed of many parties and groups, and swung to this side or that under the influence of political winds and currents not often gentle; the internal conditions of the country, as well as the external, were difficult; political experience was lacking."³⁰ Pilsudski addressed the Constituent Sejm on that day; he then resigned as Temporary Chief of State. However, he was re-elected unanimously to serve as Chief of State until a Constitution could be written and put into effect.³¹

²⁹Machray, op. cit., pp. 74-81.

³⁰Ibid., p. 81.

³¹Pilsudska, op. cit., pp. 283-284.

Pilsudski had to turn next to the problem of organizing an army, for the Bolsheviks who had overthrown Tsarist Russia, in 1917, were advancing further and further into Poland. A peace offer was made by the Bolsheviks to the Poles, but Pilsudski refused to accept it. He wanted to win back for Poland all that had been taken from her.³² The Treaty of Riga which was signed on March 18, 1921, ended the war, and the Poles obtained little more than the frontiers of 1793.³³ Pilsudski's idea for Eastern Europe was a federation of Poland with Lithuania, White Russia, and the Ukraine. But his idea was not to be realized, for he did not have the understanding of the groups concerned. Therefore, after the Russians were defeated, his main purpose in foreign policy became to keep Russia and Germany from uniting, a move which would probably sweep Poland off the map again; to keep off attacks both from East and West by alliances; to maintain a strong defensive army; and to follow an independent policy in order not to become a victim of an ally.³⁴

Pilsudski withdrew from political life in 1923, as a result of the entrance into the Government of the Witos Party in close alliance with the National Democrats. A supporter of this very coalition had earlier, in 1922, murdered the first elected President of the Republic of Poland and a friend of Pilsudski, Gabriel Narutowicz, only two weeks after his election. When that coalition came into power, Pilsudski withdrew as Chief of the General Staff and President of the Superior War Council,

³²Ibid., pp. 284-286.

³³Buell, op. cit., p. 79.

³⁴Mizwa, op. cit., pp. 361-363; Patterson, op. cit., p. 89.

saying: "The Republic is returning to the bad habits of former days, and great efforts will be needed to make it re-enter the road of moral renewal."³⁵ Pilsudski remained in the background until May, 1926, when the same coalition of Right and Center returned again to power after having fallen in 1923.³⁶

³⁵Machray, op. cit., p. 174.

³⁶Ibid., pp. 165-174.

CHAPTER IV

POLAND - POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT, 1926-1931

There were many influences which combined to bring the camp d'état, but the main cause was political. Pilsudski felt that Poland was drifting back to the anarchy of the pre-partition period. He intended to save the country from the Sejm and from all its parties. In a speech on May 25, 1926, he attacked both of these for their corruption and ineffectiveness. He was attacking not the men as much as the institutions themselves.¹

Pilsudski had wanted a constitution for Poland; he had organized a Government strong enough to act against the threatening foreign, domestic and international, to the new State; but the character of the Government and the mixture of parties involved did not provide for his vision. Instead, the legislative was exalted to the detriment of the executive. Pilsudski felt he had to intervene in the problem when circumstances seemed to require. In 1926, public opinion was ready for such a move.² The camp d'état had been the least drastic solution possible, and Pilsudski was able to put his own solution as a result of the disarray of Polish politics. The chaos that had arisen was a result of the weakness of the institutions, who had "openly supported the camp d'état" by supporting a general strike and of the peasants, who had "taken the beginning of the conflict as a signal between Left and Right, failing to perform the function of mediation which should be the role of a Center party."³

¹ OSP, p. 408; Bull., 25, 211, p. 3, 25.

² Patterson, op. cit., pp. 10-11.

CHAPTER IV

POLAND - POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT, 1926-1935

There were many influences which combined to bring the coup d'etat, but the main cause was political. Pilsudski felt that Poland was drifting back to the anarchy of the pre-partition period. He intended to save the country from the Sejm and from all its parties. In a speech on May 29, 1926, he attacked both of these for their corruption and incompetence. He was attacking not the men as much as the institutions themselves.¹

Pilsudski had wanted a constitution for Poland; he had also wanted a Government strong enough to act against the threatening dangers, economic and international, to the new State; but the slavery of the Government and the mixture of parties involved did not provide for his wants. Instead, the legislative was exalted to the detriment of the executive. Pilsudski felt he had to intervene in the problem when circumstances proved ready. In 1926, public opinion was ready for such a move.² The coup d'etat might not have been the least drastic solution possible, but Pilsudski was able to impose his own solution as a result of the disorders of Polish Parliamentary life. The chaos that had arisen was a result of the actions of the Socialists, who had "openly supported the coup d'etat" by declaring a general strike and of the peasants, who had "since the beginning of the republic oscillated between Left and Right, failing to perform the function of Stabilization which should be the role of a Center party."²

¹CHP, p. 602; Buell, op. cit., p. 89.

²Patterson, op. cit., pp. 108-109.

Buell, op. cit., p. 31; Patterson, op. cit., p. 110.

The great question among Poles after the coup d'etat was what kind of power was to be in control. Would Pilsudski become a dictator, or would he compromise between democracy and absolutism? It must be remembered that Pilsudski had been a conspirator and liked behind-the-scenes work; that he was secretive and let none share his whole confidence; and that he was a military man and understood efficiency only in terms of discipline. He favored military tactics above all else.⁴

One of the most amazing characteristics of the Pilsudski regime was, however, that he neither dissolved Parliament nor threw away the Constitution. Instead, except for the Ministry, he maintained the democratic machinery of the very Government against which he had revolted. The first Government, under the Premiership of Casimir Bartel, formed after the coup d'etat was composed almost exclusively of experts suited for the positions and of high functionaries in the Polish government. The forms of the Constitution were restored, but there was a difference in that the Sejm, though still supreme, was forced to submit to the will of one man, Pilsudski. Pilsudski did maintain, however, that if the Sejm existed it must function. The Sejm was for Poland, not Poland for the Sejm.⁵ Pilsudski expressed his opinion in an interview to the Matin, a French newspaper:

Is it quite necessary that I should be a dictator? I am a strong man and I like to decide all matters by myself. When I consider the history of my country, I cannot really believe that Poland can be governed by the stick. I don't like the stick. Our generation is not perfect, but it has a right to some respect; that which will follow will be better. No! I am not in favour of a

⁴CHP, pp. 600-601.

⁵Buell, op. cit., p. 91; Patterson, op. cit., p. 116.

dictatorship in Poland. I conceive of the role of the Chief of State in a different fashion--it is necessary that he should have the right to make quick decisions on questions of national interest. The chicanes of Parliament retard indispensable solutions. We live in legislative chaos. Our state inherited the laws and prescriptions of three states, and they have been added to. The authority of the President must be increased by simplifying things. I do not say that we should imitate exactly the United States, where the great force of the central power is counter-balanced by the large autonomy of the different States. But something in that order of ideas should be sought for what can be applied to Poland...They talk to satiety of the Right and the Left. I do not like these categories; they cover different social conceptions, and the solution of social problems is still to seek. We are the neighbors of Russia who has tried a social experiment on a great scale by putting down the old constitutions and replacing them by others. We have no wish to imitate her.

When I came here from Magdeburg at the end of the War, I had absolute power in my hands. I could have kept it, but I saw that Poland must be prudent, because she was new and poor; she had to avoid hazardous experiments. The Right and the Left with us are about equal, as the weak majority by which our social laws were passed proved. For the moment we must remain as we are, without essaying adventures with the Right or the Left. Morality in public life is the essential thing. A great effort of honesty is needed after the demoralization caused by the years of war and the centuries of slavery. I have friends in the Right and in the Left, but Poland cannot recover on a policy of party--the country and myself have had enough of these labels and programmes.⁶

By decreeing a new Constitution, Pilsudski could have found a way out of some of the problems Poland faced. It is possible that this was not done because of international and economic circumstances. Any other violent action might have been detrimental to Poland's prestige abroad and to her economic interests. Even elections for the Parliament did not take place until the regular time in 1928, and then under the established franchise.⁷

⁶Ibid., pp. 116-118.

⁷Roman Dyboski, Poland (New York; C. Scribner's Sons, 1933), p. 120.

On May 31, following the coup d'etat, Pilsudski was elected President of the Republic of Poland by 292 votes against 193 for the candidate of the Right. Pilsudski had never affirmed nor denied that he was running, but it was assumed that he was.⁸ When informed of his victory, Pilsudski said that he had no intention of accepting the election, but that his election had legalized his intervention. He also stated that he was glad not to have been elected unanimously, for that showed that there was less corruption in the Government now than there had been in 1919, when he was elected Chief of State by a unanimous vote. Pilsudski further stated that he could not forget the assassination of President Narutowicz in 1922, nor the shots fired on his house shortly before the coup d'etat. Neither could he accept an office which did not allow work that gave immediate results. Pilsudski then demanded new elections.⁹

Pilsudski suggested the election to the Presidency of Professor Ignacy Moscicki, a famous scientist and an adherent of Pilsudski's. "The nomination of President Moscicki must now be admitted to have been a masterstroke of Pilsudski's domestic diplomacy. It is not too much to say that his elevation to the Presidency averted what danger of evil war may still have lurked in the country after Pilsudski's success in the capital."¹⁰ He had never been involved in politics; his past service to the State was recognized by all; and his personal qualities made him popular.

⁸Reddaway in Marshal Pilsudski says that he did consent to run, but other accounts emphasize that he did not. The New York Times for May 30, 1926, says that Pilsudski stated that he did not care whether or not he was elected President.

⁹Machray, op. cit., pp. 216-221; Patterson, op. cit., p. 115; Reddaway, op. cit., p. 234.

¹⁰Dyboski, op. cit., pp. 113-114.

The Bartel Government, temporarily set up after the coup d'etat, resigned but was formally reconstructed at the request of the new President. When this new Government entered power in 1926, economic conditions were in a deplorable condition. A coal strike in England at that particular time, however, enabled Poland to double her coal exports, thus aiding the zloty exchange. The fall in the zloty ceased; taxes were more willingly paid; and inflation was reduced by December of that year. Pilsudski, as Minister of War, restored the stability in foreign policy and later gave his policy a new direction by turning from the traditional reliance to France to an independent effort to find a basis for stable relations with Germany, and even Russia. For as long as he lived he kept foreign affairs under his supervision. August Zaleski and Josef Beck as Foreign Ministers were only his agents.¹¹

Once the forms of the Constitution were restored, sufficient pressure through threats was brought upon the Sejm to make some of the changes advocated by Pilsudski. In an amendment voted in July by a vote of 246 to 95, and promulgated by President Moscicki on August 2, 1926, three major changes were made in order to give the President more power. The President was given the right to dissolve Parliament on a unanimous proposal by the Government, and he was to call for new elections within ninety days. The President could issue decrees having the force of law when the Sejm was not meeting, except in the cases of the Constitution and the electoral law. A motion for the resignation of the Government or of one of its Ministers

¹¹GHP, pp. 604-606.

could not be voted on in the same meeting in which the resignation was proposed, thus providing a cooling off period and an opportunity for the President to exercise his right to dissolve Parliament if he did not wish the Government changed. A fourth provision, in regard to the Budget, stated that if the Draft Governmental Budget had not been passed by the Sejm within five months after its introduction, the Budget became valid. If the Sejm was dissolved before the end of five months and the Budget had not been voted, the Government had the right to fall back on the Budget of the previous year.¹² On the same day, August 2, 1926, an Act of Full Powers was put into force which authorized the President to issue decrees having the force of law, until the new Parliament met in 1928. The powers given were in respect to:

1. Putting into force laws in accordance with the Constitution, and giving effect to its stipulations regarding special laws.
2. The reorganization and simplification of the administration of the State, and the putting in order of the legislation of the country.
3. The regulation of the administration of justice and social work.
4. The balancing of the Budget, the stabilization of the currency, and the amelioration of the economic situation, particularly touching agriculture and silviculture.¹³

On August 7, 1926, President Moscicki issued a decree that Pilsudski, as the supreme chief of the army, was to exercise his command through the Minister of War and could issue decrees concerning its action that did not

¹²Machray, op. cit., pp. 224-225, Schmitt, op. cit., p. 96.

¹³Machray, op. cit., p. 225.

require legislative approval; that he could name and dismiss the Inspector-General of the Army, the Under-Secretaries of the War Ministry, and the Chief of the General Staff. In time of peace the War Minister was chief of the army, but in time of war the Inspector-General became Commander-in-Chief. Pilsudski then made himself Inspector-General as well as War Minister, thus putting the army entirely in his hands.¹⁴

The powers of the Sejm were now clearly limited, but it still remained the body to which the Ministers were responsible. This policy was not always adhered to by the President, for with Pilsudski's backing he appointed some Ministers who did not receive the confidence of the Sejm. Pilsudski also had several quarrels with the Sejm concerning the censure and resignation of Ministers as well as the annulment of Presidential decrees. By the end of 1927, Pilsudski and the Sejm were completely divorced from each other.¹⁵ The Sejm was still capable of obstructing the Government, and in September, 1926, it forced Bartel to resign the Premiership. President Moscicki accepted the resignation, but also asked Bartel to another Ministry, which he succeeded in doing on September 27. The new Ministry, however, was made up of the same Ministers. Bartel was finally forced out in October, when the National Democrats successfully defeated the Budget in both Houses.¹⁶

The majority in the Sejm was once again the same combination of the Right and Center which had been put down by the coup d'etat. Rather than

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 225-226.

¹⁵Machray, Current History, XXXIII, 198-199.

¹⁶CHP, pp. 609-610; Reddaway, op. cit., p. 237.

risk a return of his old enemies to the Sejm in a new election, Pilsudski took over the Premiership in October, 1926, and appointed for his ministers men who were both his supporters and independent of their parties. Both houses of Parliament were then adjourned, but met again late in November to vote the Budget for the following year. A resolution was also passed abrogating a Presidential decree, which had limited the freedom of the press. After the Budget was voted in March, 1927, Parliament was sent home by Presidential decree.¹⁷

The struggle between the Government and the Sejm continued throughout 1927, but no real measures were taken, for Parliament was dissolved by Presidential decree when any action was considered which would have restored the Sejm's lost power. In October, the Sejm met to examine the draft Budget for 1928. No agreement was found; the Parliament was dissolved by Presidential decree, and elections were set for February, 1928.¹⁸

An effort had been made after 1926, to find an alternative for the unorganized party system. Now that Pilsudski was the man behind the Government, the Ministers of the Cabinet were not appointed with the idea of obtaining party backing in the Parliament. By creating in 1927 a Non-Party Bloc for Co-operation with the Government, Pilsudski hoped to draw into politics many people who had remained aloof--people who would possess a creative attitude toward public affairs and would not be affected by impressions made upon them from Berlin, Vienna, or St. Petersburg. In reality, Pilsudski was

¹⁷ Machray, op. cit., pp. 227-232.

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 233-235.

¹⁹ Poland had renewed her seat in the League of Nations Council for three years; negotiations for a commercial treaty were going on with Germany; she had submitted a Pact of Non-Aggression to the League, which was accepted; and peace was made with Lithuania.

preparing for the election of 1928, in which he had to have an organization to back him. The Socialists had passed into an opposition party after the 1926 coup d'etat, because Pilsudski began co-operating with the industrialists and big landowners. Some of the Socialists, however, found their personal loyalty stronger than their socialism and followed Pilsudski. Colonel Valerian Slawek, one of the former Socialists, became the head of the new Bloc, which was to cut across all parties as a result of the Marshal's popularity. Pilsudski called this move sanacja (purification), thus indicating that he was carrying out a necessary purge of the parliamentary system. Pilsudski stated that he favored the formation of the Bloc because it would unite all others against it, and Poland's best hope lay in its triumph, for it would not put petty interests above those of the state. It actually became a group of Pilsudski's supporters, opportunists, and those who were in contempt of the party system.¹⁹

The question facing the voters in the elections of 1928 was simply whether or not Pilsudski was to be allowed to rule Poland. The coup d'etat of May had been successful; the reduction of Legislative power and the strengthening of the Executive had been beneficial; revenue was increasing; the income and consumption of the people was growing as a result of the growing prosperity of Poland; the zloty was stable; inflation was ended; and the position and prestige of Poland abroad had been enhanced.²⁰

¹⁹Rose, GPD, p. 18; Rose, Poland, p. 16; Schmitt, op. cit., p. 117; CHP, p. 610; Oscar Halecki (ed), Poland (East-Central Europe Under the Communists Series, Published for the Mid-European Studies Center of the Free Europe Committee, Inc., New York: Fredwick A. Praeger, 1957), p. 101.

²⁰Poland had renewed her seat in the League of Nations Council for three years; negotiations for a commercial treaty were going on with Germany; she had submitted a Pact of Non-Aggression to the League, which was accepted; and peace was made with Lithuania.

These were the qualifications of the Pilsudski Government.²¹

The election of the Sejm took place on March 4, 1928, and that for the Senate a week later. In the course of the campaign there had been no general interference with public liberties as there are in dictatorships. Therefore, the elections of 1928 were considered an honest opinion of the Polish people. The Government Bloc of Pilsudski received 135 seats in the Sejm, thus making it much the largest single group, but it did not obtain a majority. In the number of votes cast for the Sejm the Bloc polled nearly 2,400,000 in comparison to the 1,500,000 received by the Socialists and the 1,700,000 by the National Democrats. In the Senate the Bloc obtained 49 seats out of 111. Seventy-eight per cent of the country had voted, and the election was considered a victory for Pilsudski, although a majority had not been elected.²²

In a meeting with the leaders of the Government Bloc, Pilsudski, still the Premier, said that he would try for the third time to make it possible for the Sejm and Government to work together by having the Sejm reform its methods of work. The Message of the President to the two newly elected Houses in March, 1928, contained Pilsudski's plans. As Pilsudski was delivering the message to the Sejm, the Communist deputies in the Sejm tried to shout down the Marshal, but Pilsudski ordered them removed from the meeting for creating a disturbance. After reading the Message, Pilsudski put forward as his candidate for the Speaker of the Sejm, Bartel. The other candidate was Daszynski, a Socialist who stood halfway between Pilsudski and his enemies. On the second ballot Daszynski was elected, in protest

²¹Machray, op. cit., 239.

²²Ibid., pp. 241-243.

against the Marshal's action towards the Communist representatives. After part of the Budget had been voted by the new Parliament, it was announced that Pilsudski was resigning the Premiership, that his resignation had been accepted, and that a new Government had been constituted with Bartel as Premier. The Government was practically the same as that of Pilsudski, and Pilsudski retained the Ministry of War. Pilsudski stated that he had resigned because the position of Premier, badly defined in the Constitution, was as intolerable as that of the Presidency to a man of his temperament.²³ He said:

In order to avoid misunderstanding I wish to declare that I personally as Dictator called Parliament together and co-operated with it constitutionally, even though I could have crushed the whole lot under my thumb like a vile worm. When the third Sejm began its work, and I saw no possibility as Prime Minister of tolerating its methods, I faced the alternative of introducing new laws or resigning. I chose the second way."²⁴

Pilsudski then declared that he might have remained Prime Minister if he had not had to deal with the Sejm, "a sterile, jabbering, howling thing that engendered such boredom as made the very flies die of sheer disgust."²⁵ He continued:

All the time I was Prime Minister I was more Constitutional than the Sejm, and no one can say that I have been wanting in democratic convictions. I would that our deputies would not identify their methods of work with democracy. They do democracy no honour. When the third Sejm started work, and as Prime Minister I saw the bad old habits renewing their triumphs, I decided that once more I had to choose between abandoning all collaboration with the Sejm, while placing myself at the disposal of the President

²³Ibid., pp. 243-246; CHP, 610.

²⁴Machray, op. cit., p. 247.

²⁵Ibid.; CHP, p. 610.

to impose new institutions on Poland, or I had to resign the Premiership. I resigned, and advised the President to replace me by some personality willing to be the head of the Government-- for a certain time. I added that in case of a grave crisis I shall put myself at the disposal of the President, and boldly take responsibility for decisions and face not less boldly their consequences."²⁶

When the Polish Parliament met again, in October, 1928, it was assumed that its purpose was to reform the Constitution. At first, there was an attempt among the Parties to co-operate, but co-operation soon broke down on a constitutional issue. The draft of a new Constitution was put before the Sejm by the Government Bloc on February 6, 1929, aiming at instituting in Poland a Presidential form of Government similar to that of the United States. Its chief advocate was Colonel Valerian Slawek, the head of the Government Bloc. The National Democrats were definitely opposed to the draft, and the Government Bloc was divided on the matter. Slawek's following, therefore, became the Colonels' Group, and Bartel led the other more moderate group. It was apparent that the draft would not be passed without some changes in its provisions.

In the meantime, Pilsudski had been vacationing in Rumania in an attempt to re-gain his health. He had said that the state of his health had nothing to do with his resignation, but it had been obvious at the time that he was feverish, exhausted and worn out by the demands of his attention from all sides. His health had begun to decline somewhat rapidly, but he refused

²⁶ Machray, op. cit., p. 247.

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 249-254.

medical attention. He was back in Warsaw when the constitutional issue arose, which ended the Bartel Government. Pilsudski was still the power behind the President, Premier, and Cabinet though no public announcement was ever made of such. Yet, the fact was well-known. It was not his prompting, however, that brought on the issue between the Sejm and the Government.²⁸

Because of better financial conditions in Poland, large sums had been used by the Government for works of development without the authority of the Sejm. The Sejm claimed that such expenditures should be subjected to their authority, but to no avail. Therefore, on March 20, 1929, the Sejm impeached the Finance Minister in the Bartel Government, Gabriel Czechowicz, and he was then to be tried by the State Tribunal. It was actually a means of attacking Pilsudski, but President Moscicki retaliated by adjourning Parliament. The Bartel Government resigned in April, and Casimir Switalski became the new Premier. Czechowski's trial was begun, but the Court decided in favor of him. The ineffectiveness of the Sejm was becoming more and more apparent. Many sessions were called and adjourned at once.²⁹

One particular incident of trouble with the Sejm occurred on October 31, 1929, when the Sejm was to reopen. Before the time of opening, a number of army officers assembled in the lobby of the Sejm to cheer Pilsudski when he arrived. Daszynski refused to open the meeting until the officers left the hall. They refused to obey his order to disperse. Even when Pilsudski tried to persuade Daszynski to open the Sejm he refused, saying that the officers were making armed demonstrations. Pilsudski went to the President to explain his version of the incident. President Moscicki then adjourned

²⁸Reddaway, op. cit., p. 259.

²⁹Machray, op. cit., pp. 255-257; CHP, pp. 610-611.

Parliament until November 5, but on that day adjourned it again for another month.³⁰

When the Sejm again opened on December 5, Daszynski stated that the work at hand was the revision of the Constitution. There was also the problem of an essential economy. But the opposition of the Centrolew, composed of the Witos Pupulists, the National Workers, the Christian Democrats, the Radical Populists, the Peasant Party, and the Socialists, moved a vote of non-confidence. After nine hours of discussion it was passed, and the Switalski Government was forced to resign. President Moscicki proceeded to bring all political chiefs together to find out whether or not the Sejm was ready to revise the Constitution. The meeting produced a better atmosphere among the parties in the Sejm. Bartel again became Prime Minister and formed a successful Government by reducing the number of Ministers in the Government belonging to the Colonels' Group, thus indicating a "less forthright policy on the part of Pilsudski."³¹

During much of 1929, Poland's prestige at home and abroad improved immensely. Her products were displayed at a great national exhibition at Poznan; her relations with adjoining Powers were improving; and she was negotiating for a permanent seat on the League Council. Because Germany was still disarmed and Russia was in a struggle with her peasantry, Poland with her army had the appearance of a Great Power. But before the year ended, Poland's economic progress had been checked, and the world crisis

³⁰Machray, op. cit., pp. 261-262; CHP, pp. 611-612. The CHP cites this as the reason for Bartel's resignation, but this cannot possibly be true since Bartel had resigned in April, and the Swistalski Government was in power.

³¹Machray, op. cit., pp. 264-265.

had begun, not as a result of Poland's actions, but as a result of circumstances beyond her control.³²

After much trouble in the Sejm from the beginning of January until March 29, a Budget was finally voted. Although the Bartel Ministry did not have the confidence of the Sejm, it had existed at the request of the President until a Budget could be voted. It now resigned, and a new Ministry was formed by Colonel Slawek. The President then decreed the adjournment of Parliament. A few days later, a statement by the Centrolew called for the "abolition of the dictatorship and a return to the lawful regime." On May 9, 1930, a petition was presented to President Moscicki by Daszynski, requesting an extraordinary session of the Sejm. The Sejm was therefore summoned for May 23, but on that day President Moscicki decreed it adjourned for another thirty days. Daszynski convoked the Sejm on June 23, but again it was adjourned by the President. A great cry arose from the Centrolew concerning the unconstitutionality of this action, and an announcement was made for a meeting of a great Congress of the Centrolew on June 29.³³

The Slawek Government suddenly resigned on August 23, and Pilsudski became Prime Minister again. The Ministers in the Government remained the same as before, except for a newcomer, Colonel Josef Beck, who became Vice-Premier. Moscicki announced the dissolution of Parliament, and elections to the two Houses were decreed for November on the basis that the previous Parliament had been unable to revise the Constitution.³⁴

³²Reddaway, op. cit., pp. 265-266.

³³Machray, op. cit., pp. 267-270.

³⁴Ibid., p. 275.

On September 10, 1930, Pilsudski arrested the chief leaders of the Centrolew, who, at their congress in June, had passed several resolutions, among them one demanding the resignation of the President. Witos, the former Prime Minister, was among those arrested. These leaders were sent to solitary confinement at the fortress of Brest-Litovsk on the charge of civil and political crimes.³⁵

Justified or unjustified, the action was decisive. He had chosen his moment well. His Government had given the country great benefits. He had seemed, at least, to show marked reluctance to put himself in the position of an absolute ruler. He had so managed things that year after year the Seym had shown itself in the most unfavourable light. For all these reasons he was stronger now than in 1926, so much stronger that he had now not much to fear from the adherents of the abstract principles of democracy. The nation was now ready to accept his government de jure as well as de facto, and, for the rest of his life, democratic institutions in Poland were reduced to an empty form.³⁶

In the 1930 elections, the fight lay between the Government Bloc and the Centrolew. This time the Government Bloc received a majority though not the necessary two-thirds majority needed to amend the Constitution. The Bloc received 247 seats out of 444 in the Seym. The vote was 5,293, 694 votes for the Bloc and 1,907, 380 for the Centrolew. In the Senate the Bloc received 76 of the 111 seats, more than the two-thirds necessary.³⁷ This election showed that the Centrolew had little chance of success because of the obvious differences in the policies of the groups involved. The

³⁵Ibid.; Rose, Poland, p. 19.

³⁶CHP., p. 612.

³⁷Machrary, op. cit., pp. 276-277.

Peasant Parties therefore began negotiations to unite as a Populist Party, which had a great influence over the nation after the union.³⁸

Now that conditions were set for a revision of the Constitution, Pilsudski resigned the Premiership on December 14, 1930, and turned it over again to Colonel Slawek, but Pilsudski remained Minister of War. In the new Sejm which met, Switalski was elected Speaker. The Bloc in the Sejm was resigned to revising the Constitution, but the opposition to championing their friends, now on bail from the Brest-Litovsk fortress. A Budget also had to be voted.³⁹

Pilsudski did not remain in Warsaw for the meeting of the Sejm but retired to Madeira for a rest from December, 1930, to March, 1931. While he was gaining fresh strength, the Government in Warsaw was learning to govern alone without the hand of the Marshal. Before leaving, he delivered in an interview his opinion on the reform of the Constitution--that the sovereign should be the President, and that he should have full powers.⁴⁰

On March 4, the Sejm began debating the proposed revision of the Constitution by the Government Bloc, but was forced to refer it to the Constitutional Committee because of the lack of a two-thirds majority of the Bloc in the Sejm. A Budget had been voted when the Parliament closed on March 21, but nothing had been done about the Constitution. Also, Slawek had attempted to justify the arrest of the Opposition leaders in September,

³⁸Rose, Poland, pp. 19-20.

³⁹Machray, op. cit., pp. 278-279; Reddaway. op. cit., pp. 283-284.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 286; Machray, op. cit., p. 279.

1930, but nothing further was done about that situation.⁴¹

When Marshal Pilsudski returned to Warsaw on March 29, 1931, it was expected that some changes would be made in the Slawek Government since it had not been successful in having the Constitution revised. Nothing happened, however, until May, when Slawek did resign as Premier, stating that he wanted to devote his full time to leading the Government Bloc and pushing forward the amendment to the Constitution. Count Alexander Prystor, the Minister of Commerce in the Slawek Government, became the new Prime Minister.⁴²

As a result of the world depression, the financial situation of Poland required particular attention, especially since the situation had become more intensified by the abandonment of England and other countries of the Gold Standard in 1931. The Polish Parliament, therefore, met a month early in October, 1931, with the express purpose of trying to keep a firm hold on the domestic economic situation. The Bank of Poland was good; the zloty was stable; expenditure had been decreased to meet the fall of the revenue; and the balancing of the Budget was to be maintained. Most of the sessions of the Sejm were concerned with the economic situation, although there was some discussion on the Constitution. On November 9, Parliament was adjourned for a month by Presidential decree.⁴³

The years 1932-1933 found Poland more involved in the international situation than in any other field. At the beginning of 1932, the conclusion

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 280-284.

⁴²Ibid., pp. 286-287; CHP, 213.

⁴³Machray, op. cit., pp. 290-291.

of negotiations for a non-aggression pact with Soviet Russia was finally reached after having been discussed since 1926. However, the pact included no guarantee regarding the frontiers. Poland and Rumania also signed a communiqué that they were in perfect accord. Furthermore, with the rise of Hitler in Germany all Europe was alarmed, especially Poland, for Hitler's policy was expansion, particularly to the East, and the "obliteration" of Poland.⁴⁴

Yet, the political development of Poland was not without its consequences. Those who had been arrested in September, 1930, were brought to trial and sentenced on an accusation that they had conspired to eliminate by violence members of the Government. Witos was given the lightest sentence of eighteen months because of his record of service in the early years of the Republic, but he fled the country and did not serve his sentence. The Sejm took up much of its time with the Budget. When the Sejm adjourned on March 18, it gave the President the power to issue decrees during its recess if such prompt issues would improve the situation, but it specified certain reservations, such as the maintenance of the value of the zloty and of the Statutes of the Bank of Poland. Most of the decrees promulgated by President Moscicki during the Sejm's recess were made in consultation with the Prime Minister Prystor and with former Prime Ministers. The decrees dealt with agricultural and industrial undertakings or with the burden of taxes and debts.⁴⁵

⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 295-301.

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 297-301.

When the Sejm resumed its work on November 3, one important change had occurred in the Government. Colonel Josef Beck had succeeded August Zaleski, the Minister of Foreign Affairs since 1926.⁴⁶ This change was especially important since the situation in Germany began to occupy Poland's interests. The International scene was becoming more and more the major interest because the rise of Germany naturally threatened Polish independence, especially if Germany and Soviet Russia should come to any kind of agreements. On January 30, 1933, Hitler became Chancellor of Germany, and it was feared that the policy of the revisionists in Germany would now be carried out. That policy was to revise the territorial clauses of the Versailles Treaty. The Germans particularly demanded the Polish "Corridor," that strip of land taken from them which gave Poland access to the Baltic Sea.⁴⁷

The main issue, however, was still the economic crisis. The Sejm, on December 20, 1932, authorized in spite of the Opposition the conversion on mortgage long-term farm bonds to a maximum of $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent, thus making the present conditions more or less permanent. The payments of principal were suspended for three years.⁴⁸ Prices had fallen on the goods produced by

⁴⁶Machray seems to think that Zaleski had to resign because of his health. John Hunter Harley in The Authentic Biography of Colonel Beck asserts that Beck had been called upon by Pilsudski to make some decisions while Zaleski was still Minister of Foreign Affairs and Beck was Under-Secretary, and that Zaleski resigned because he was jealous of Beck's prestige. He hastens to add that it was not Beck's purpose to make Zaleski jealous, that Beck was merely carrying out the orders of Pilsudski. The CHP says that it was done because Pilsudski was making a change in his foreign policy from alliance with France to alliance with Russia and Germany. Zaleski's sympathies lay with France while Beck's sympathies were with Germany. This seems to be the most logical explanation although personal feelings may have entered into the change.

⁴⁷Machray, op. cit., p. 315.

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 311-313.

farmers, which meant that most people suffered because two-thirds of the people lived from agriculture. Many lived on bread, potatoes and tea during this period. Industry was no longer profitable, debts were unpaid, business collapsed, and wages were cut time after time.⁴⁹

In the midst of these problems, the Presidential election took place. Moscicki was again elected President of Poland on May 8, 1933, by the National Assembly - Sejm and Senate sitting together. It was Pilsudski's wish that Moscicki be re-elected, and there was little hostility to the re-election, although Moscicki himself would have preferred to return to his professorship and research work. In accordance with usage the Government then resigned, and Prystor, the Prime Minister, asked to retire for reasons of health. Janus Jedrzejewicz became Prime Minister. No change of policy took place, and the Pilsudski regime continued. A new Constitution was in preparation, but because of the international and the economic situations, Pilsudski felt that the time was not quite right for its adoption. It was only after some agreements were made by Poland with the free city of Danzig, and the entire world situation seemed calmer that Poland turned towards the question of the Constitution.

On August 2, a project for the revision of the Constitution was presented by Stanislas Carr, Vice-President of the Sejm, to representatives of the Government Bloc. It advocated an increase in the power of the President, enabling him to govern by decrees. The second House, the Senate, was to have powers equal to those of the Sejm, with two-thirds of its members elected by limited suffrage and one-third nominated by the President. The Sejm was to be elected by universal suffrage on the

⁴⁹ Reddaway, op. cit., pp. 303-304.

the Sejm adopted the project as the draft of a Bill for a new Constitution. It was passed by a majority of two-thirds of the vote, which virtually meant that it was an Act, for the Sejm had a two-thirds

Reddaway, op. cit., pp. 327-330.

basis of proportional representation, but it was to lose its old supremacy. Carr presented a draft of the new Constitution to the Sejm in late December. It was based on the lines indicated in the August proposal.⁵⁰

Little had taken place during the session of the Sejm which ^{had} begun in late autumn. There were discussions concerning the economic situation, the foreign situation, and the problem with Jewish and German minorities, but no decisive action was taken on any of these. The Budget was unbalanced, unemployment continued to increase, and the Constitution remained unrevised, although a draft had been presented to the Sejm.

But after work was resumed by Parliament in 1934, plans were made by the Government Bloc in the Sejm to get the act for the new Constitution passed. The Constitutional Commission adopted, on January 18, a draft of sixty-three articles entitled "Constitutional Theses" to which the Opposition in the Sejm attached little significance. It was then submitted to the Sejm to be debated on January 26. Before it was discussed, Carr made a speech on the merits of the Theses. During the discussion, the spokesman for the Nationalists declared that neither he nor his party was interested in the draft, and they contemptuously left the hall. The Socialists regarded it as a consolidation of the Pilsudski regime and would have nothing to do with it. Other members of the Opposition expressed their disapproval. After more comments, Switalski, the Speaker of the Sejm, suspended the sitting at 7 o'clock in the evening. However, it was resumed fifteen minutes later, and most of the members who returned were of the Bloc. Carr arose and suggested that, since the Opposition took no interest in the reform of the Constitution, the Sejm adopt the Theses as the draft of a Bill for a new Constitution. It was passed by a majority of two-thirds of the vote, which virtually meant that it was an Act, for the Bloc had a two-thirds

⁵⁰Machray, op. cit., pp. 327-334.

majority in the Senate. Parliament was about to close when the Bill was sent to the Senate on March 12, and its consideration was postponed until November, in accordance with the wishes of Pilsudski who felt that some modification or expedient of the Bill was necessary. A revised Budget for 1934 was also voted by the Sejm, mainly because the two chief parties in opposition to the Bloc were never able to reach an agreement among themselves by which they could oppose the Bloc.⁵¹

On the same day, January 26, 1934, that the new Constitution was voted, Poland also signed a Ten Year Pact with Germany, in which any resort to force for the settlement of problems was renounced. However, it was not to concern the internal affairs of either nation. All of Europe was sceptical of this move,⁵² but Pilsudski was jubilant over the treaty. He did not feel, however, that a war would be put off for ten years. He said:

If only means that Hitler has postponed it. Poland is not so weak as all that, nor is Germany as strong and united as he will wish to make her before he takes upon himself the risk of a war. The respite will give us time to organize our lives, but after that we must be ready to defend ourselves. We have no other alternative.⁵²

During 1933-34, while the Constitution was being voted and the international situation was changing, there were also regroupings and developments in the Polish parties. Members of the Right supporting Pilsudski formed themselves into a Union of Conservative Organization with a program similar to that of the Government Bloc, but it kept its

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 327-344, 350.

⁵²Pilsudska, op. cit., p. 341. Although Madame Pilsudska is definitely pro-Pilsudski, this statement quoted by her is very possible. Pilsudski understood the ways of Hitler and Stalin, and he was probably capable of analyzing the situation.

own distinct organization. A Pilsudski Legion of Youth emerged from the Bloc, while, at the same time, a similar group, the Camp of Great Poland, emerged from the National Party. Both were more or less indications of Hitler's League of Youth. In 1934, the Camp of Great Poland became the "National Radical Party" with a distinctly fascist approach, but strongly anti-German. They organized a militia and persuaded the lower middle-class youths and the unemployed to join them. The Government was suspicious of the Polish Nazi group and dissolved it in July of 1934. The Legion of Youth from the Government Bloc eventually became so socialistic that the members of the Bloc, who at first patronized it, withdrew their support.⁵³

The Jędrzejewicz Cabinet resigned on May 13, 1934, and Leon Kozłowski, a former Minister of Agrarian Reform became Prime Minister of the Government. No important changes were made in the Government. The appointment of Kozłowski had simply been to give fresh impetus to the fight against the economic crisis in industry and agriculture. Pilsudski and Beck remained in the offices of Minister of War and Minister of Foreign Affairs, respectively. The Government continued its policy of trying to raise the price of farm produce and lower those of goods, but the disappointing harvest of 1934 kept prices from improving. However, the new port of Gdynia was being completed, and a railroad to the port was being constructed. Still, Poland saw the bottom of the depression in 1934.⁵⁴

⁵³Machray, op. cit., pp. 350-351.

⁵⁴Ibid., pp. 355-370.

Parliament met again in October, 1934, but its concern was with international, not internal affairs. Nothing in particular was accomplished. But in January, 1935, when Parliament resumed after the holidays, the Sejm began to work on the problem of the Budget while the Senate debated the Bill creating the new Constitution. On January 18, the Bill, amended by the Senate, was passed. The reaction to its passing was more passive than apathetic or indifferent, for all realized that the Bill would be passed. The amended Bill was then sent back to the Sejm.⁵⁵

The new Constitution measure, as amended by the Senate, was passed by the Sejm by a vote of 260 to 139. It awaited the signature of the President before it became an Act. On March 28, Parliament was dissolved, and the Government resigned, only to be reconstituted the next day with Colonel Slawek replacing Kozlowski as Prime Minister. Although it was not published at the time, the reason for this move was the gravity of Pilsudski's illness.⁵⁶

The new Constitution Bill was signed by President Moscicki on April 23, 1935. A series of Acts still had to be passed governing the elections to the Sejm and Senate.⁵⁷ These were outlined by Slawek later on May 7. Carr, who had originally introduced the Bill, expressed that the system of the Constitution was to be neither totalitarian nor democratic. It was distinctly Polish in its reversion to the old State and national tradition of liberty in Poland, for it was felt by the Bloc that only a strong and ~~authoritarian~~ regime would assure the nation an independent existence and

⁵⁵Ibid., pp. 368, 375-376.

⁵⁶Ibid., pp. 381-384.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 392.

position among the other nations. It was in accordance with the principle of "a free citizen of a strong State."⁵⁸ The Constitution embodied the principles for which Pilsudski had been fighting since 1926. In effect, it merely gave legal form to the system of personal government he had been following for nine years. Designed to meet the conditions of the time in Poland, the Constitution was not easily understood by other Powers.⁵⁹

When the Constitution was approved, the Marshal was ill, but it was not discovered until April that he was dying of cancer. Therefore, at the time when the Constitution was passed, many people felt that Pilsudski would become President of the Republic of Poland. Although he had been seriously ill at various times since 1931, the knowledge had been kept from most people, and they were, therefore, not aware of the seriousness of Pilsudski's illness. On May 12, Pilsudski died and the entire nation was shocked.⁶⁰

Pilsudski had attempted to prepare Poland to develop without his rule, but he had not succeeded. The Power remained in the hands of Pilsudski's friends, the Colonels' Group, who "proceeded rapidly to accumulate wealth and honours, free from the restraints imposed by the stern supervision of

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 382-283. This philosophy reminds one of the writings of Rousseau and Hegel who thought that man was not free unless he was a member of the centralized State. Perhaps Poland was making a mistake by returning to the ideals of nineteenth century thought in the era of the twentieth century, an era of democracies and dictatorships. However, perhaps she was a leader in a difficult age. The new Constitution was more than likely necessary in order for Poland to succeed as an independent nation. But the fact that other nations did not understand nor accept it would of course have made it less workable. Today the Constitution of the French Republic is similar to the 1935 Constitution of Poland, and it seems to be necessary for France at this particular time.

⁵⁹*CHP*, pp. 613-614.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, p. 614; Machray, *op. cit.*, pp. 395-397.

Pilsudski."⁶¹ Those men included the Prime Minister Slawek, the Foreign Minister Beck, and Colonel Adam Koc, the man who represented the trend in that group towards a totalitarian system.⁶² The nation had been united in its support of Pilsudski; it had never willingly followed any of the 'Group'. Now that Pilsudski was dead the nation was to become divorced from the government; dissension was to develop even among the 'Group'; an attempt was to be made by some of the government to return to a less totalitarian system than that ^{which} the 'Group' was advocating. The two most patriotic who remained in the Polish Government were President Moscicki and General Rydz-Smigly, who was named by Pilsudski as his successor to the post of Inspector-General.⁶³

But because of the importance of foreign affairs, Colonel Josef Beck, the Foreign Minister, became the most important figure in Poland after the death of Pilsudski. In a message to the Poles shortly after Pilsudski's death, Beck stated that he planned to follow the same foreign policy that Pilsudski had followed. But there were differences in Beck's personality that damaged Poland's place in Europe as a rather important power.

Beck, like the rest of the 'Group' was receptive to flattery and seemed to be over impressed with his own importance. Beck himself was a representative of the "swaggering, big-mouthed style of that regime."

⁶¹Seton-Watson, op. cit., p. 165.

⁶²Ibid., p. 169; CHP, p. 615.

⁶³Rose, Poland, pp. 23-25.

In contrast, Pilsudski seemed to be much more concerned with Poland's position than impressed with it, and he also showed a grave concern for the general international situation. At a time when the Allies were following a policy of isolation, and when Germany was building up her strength, Pilsudski felt that Poland should take an independent policy in order not to become an object of bargaining by other nations. This was the policy he used in negotiations while he was alive. Beck made the mistake of continuing the policy long after the situation had changed as a result of the growing power and strength of Germany and Soviet Russia.⁶⁴

Without the ability that Pilsudski had for analyzing situations, Beck became caught in a web from which he was unable to release himself. He meant well, but he did not seem to possess the intelligence needed by a Foreign Minister. He thought that he was putting first and last the interests of Poland. For that very reason he became a tool of German imperialism.⁶⁵ Beck failed to realize that his association with Germany was merely a passing situation as far as Hitler was concerned. Poland, to him, was a great Power, able to dominate policy as easily as she accepted it.

The agents of Hitler apparently approached Beck with great flattery. He believed it all. When he did act as an auxiliary of Hitler, he always acted in the name of the Polish Republic, for he was not conscious that he was Hitler's stooge or ally. Beck felt self-confident and secure in his policy. It evidently never occurred to him that to be an ally of Germany

⁶⁴Samuel L. Sharp, Poland, White Eagle on a Red Field (Cambridge at the University Press, 1953), pp. 132-133.

⁶⁵Machray, op. cit., p. 60; Seton-Watson, op. cit., pp. 387-388. Seton-Watson also says that Beck did not like Germany. All others say that Beck liked Germany and hated France for personal reasons.

guaranteed for Germany no intervention by France, for Poland was a member of the French Security System.⁶⁶

Colonel Beck was an advocate of bilateralism and wanted no other type of treaty. He was especially against collective security and helped to destroy it for Poland in Eastern Europe. The occupation of the free port of Danzig by the Nazis in 1938, apparently was not sufficient evidence to Beck that Poland was to fall under German occupation.⁶⁷

By March 1939, the Polish nation was distressed by Beck's policies. His reputation was falling quite rapidly. Attempts had been made by President Moscicki and Marshal Rydz-Smigly to remove Beck from the Government. Apparently for fear of losing his position, Beck changed his policy and signed an agreement with the British in 1939, in an effort to create a united front against German aggression.⁶⁸

Beck was not able to retain the prestige of Poland by relying strictly on the policy which had been Pilsudski's in 1933-1934. Conditions had changed. Beck's policy did not change with them. One wonders if perhaps Pilsudski would not have returned to his former alliance with the Allies after conditions began to show quite clearly that Germany was preparing to make a move. This would have been in line with Pilsudski's zigzag pattern of taking whatever side provided the best interests for Poland. Whether or not Beck could have changed the situation from 1935-1939 by reverting back to a policy of conciliation when conditions

⁶⁶Sharp, op. cit., pp. 137-140.

⁶⁷Ibid., pp. 140-143.

⁶⁸Ibid., pp. 143-144.

called for it would be difficult to answer, but it most certainly would have made him look less like the clown that he appeared to be to the rest of Europe, and he would not have been so responsible for the situation that developed.

Was Pilsudski a Dictator? This is the question most historians ask themselves after a study of Polish political development between the wars. There are similarities of Pilsudski to dictators of his time and to men of earlier times but there are also differences. In historical background he was probably closer to Lenin than to any other dictator. Both were taught to hate Tsardom by their mothers and both were greatly influenced by the attempted assassination of Tsar Alexander III in 1887, which sent Lenin's brother to the gallows and Pilsudski and his brother to Siberia. Both lived for the revolution, spending many years in poverty and exile while working for that cause. Both were journalists, organizers, and effective speakers. Both split their parties. Both rose to the head of a State, towered over their associates, won the worship of their people, and remained political forces in their respective countries after death.¹

But the differences between the two men were greater than the similarities. Pilsudski was a patriot; Lenin a universalist. Pilsudski was the realist; Lenin the doctrinaire. Pilsudski dominated Poland for nine years while Lenin ruled Russia for only five. Despite his long reign Pilsudski remained as great to the Poles as Lenin did to the Russians.² Even some of Pilsudski's similarities to Lenin were different. He hated Tsardom for its oppression of the Polish people. He wanted a revolution

¹Hodgway, op. cit., p. 22.

²Ibid., pp. 217-218.

CHAPTER V

PILSUDSKI - DICTATOR?

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¹Reddaway, op. cit., p. 317.

²Ibid., pp. 317-319.

because he thought it was the one way Poland could free herself from the three Powers. These were certainly not in accord with the reasons for Lenin's hatred of Tsardom and wish for revolution.

Unlike two other modern day dictators, Hitler and Mussolini, Pilsudski did not concentrate all power in himself as conspicuously as possible. Instead, he concentrated in himself only the minimum powers necessary for an efficient government.³ A contemporary of Pilsudski, who wrote in 1930 of the coup d'etat, said that Pilsudski was a hot-headed patriot who would have gladly followed Mussolini's course if he had not met strong opposition from Parliament.⁴ Of course this was a strongly anti-Pilsudski opinion. Another writer of the same period who was more or less pro-Pilsudski felt that Pilsudski planned to legalize his position and intimated that Mussolini also tried to legalize his, but failed and was forced to dissolve Parliament.⁵ In an earlier report written two weeks after the coup d'etat he declared that the government set up by Pilsudski was neither a military nor a minority dictatorship, for it had the backing of labor and of many others who demonstrated against the government.⁶ It was a popular revolt against the Government.

³CHP, p. 603, Patterson, op. cit., pp. 115-116.

⁴N. Tassin. "Marshal Pilsudski," Living Age, CCCXXXIX (December, 1930), 385.

⁵F. H. Simmonds. "Josef Pilsudski," Review of Reviews, LXXVII (May, 1928), 515.

⁶F. H. Simmonds. "Pilsudski's Coup," Literary Digest, LXXIV (May 29, 1926), 10.

Pilsudski was compared by one author with Oliver Cromwell after the execution of King Charles I. Each had struggled with a factious parliament; each having liberated his respective country was forced to govern it because of his strength in the nation. But Cromwell had won his victories over his own English countrymen while Pilsudski's victories had been over foreign oppressors to Poland. Cromwell was the idol of a party but Pilsudski was the idol of a nation.⁷

The one definite attribute of a dictator that Pilsudski did possess, which is one considered highly important by all dictators was the support of the army.⁸ But it must be remembered that the army of Poland was Pilsudski's creation. He had started its formation in 1905 to fight for Poland before most Poles even dreamed of a united and independent Poland. It would be difficult to imagine the Polish army other than loyal to Pilsudski. Pilsudski was not a dictator; he was a Polish Patriot. If he had wanted to be that, he would never have withdrawn as he did from the public eye. He would have forced submission of the crowds to him. This he never did. Pilsudski probably did not want to be a dictator, but he would have been if he had thought that was what Poland needed in her development. He liked secrecy and behind-the-scenes work. From that vantage point he might have accepted dictatorship, but it would never have been for personal praise and glory. It would have been for what he thought were the best interests of Poland.

⁷CHP, p. 604.

⁸Machray, Current History, XXXIII, 196.

Pilsudski was virtually in personal charge of Poland from November, 1918, to February, 1919, as Chief of State, but instead of remaining such he called an election for a Constituent Assembly to which he promptly handed his power, apparently believing that freedom would produce a patriotic temperament in the Polish people which would wipe away all ancient faults and result in a solid blend of civic virtues. Pilsudski wanted a State possessing the strength for self-preservation but also a democratic State. He expected all Poles to be as patriotic toward Poland as he and to sacrifice all necessary for its good. But in everyday life human beings do not behave as heroes, and furthermore, dissension developed among the Poles themselves.⁹

Pilsudski put the interests of his country before that of his own comfort.¹⁰ When the Polish people did not act likewise, he said:

I do not reproach the Polish people. But I am a realist, taking things as they are, and not as I should like to see them. I strive, as I have always striven to look at them without illusion. I profess wholeheartedly the principle of the world's greatest men, Napoleon; the art of breaking down obstacles is the art of not regarding them as such. We Poles, alas! excel in creating obstacles, and in suffering words to dominate reality. Throughout our own history we lack actual achievement. In a narrow field we do well: outside it, we shrink back from every obstacle...¹¹

Pilsudski knew Poland; he knew its past and its present, its weaknesses and its strengths; he was anxious to create a structure based on this knowledge.¹²

At one period, however, in the history of the independent Poland, the political enemies of Pilsudski were able to banish him from public life. The love of their freedom based on the idea of the nineteenth century

⁹Mizwa, op. cit., 357-359.

¹⁰Seton-Watson, op. cit., p. 165.

¹¹Reddaway. op. cit., pp. 83-84.

¹²Mizwa, loc. cit.

democracy in addition to the evils they had suffered under arbitrary governments, turned their heads from the ideas of Pilsudski.

To think that freedom means that one can do what one likes is to endanger society. Better said, if carried to the limit, it makes society impossible. It also makes the state impossible, opening the doors to anarchy. Not to realize that the essence of democracy is respect for law and order, to which one should submit even if it means suffering injustice for the time being, is to court authoritarianism, or even tyranny. This was the hardest kind of lesson for liberty-loving people like the Poles to learn.¹³

The only solution was for Pilsudski to wait until people began to realize that this system was wrong for Poland at this particular time. The country was neither secure nor prosperous.¹⁴ After all, Poland was a new state which had not been able to develop politically as other nations. History has demonstrated that it has been difficult for any nation to become democratic without first having some form of centralization under one leader. One needs only to study the development of the nation state of France, England, or Russia to see that this is true. The movement from strong rulers to weak ones caused the growth of nations not dominated by monarchs. By 1937, Poland was returning to more democratic methods.¹⁵ It is possible that if World War II, and the advent of Communism in Eastern Europe had not occurred, Poland might be as democratic today as any other so-called democratic state.

While in retirement, Pilsudski still remained "the hero, the strong man, the born ruler" to many Poles. Many feared him, but they respected him. He advertised and denounced the dishonesty of corrupt politicians. He was contemptuous of parties, for they caused factions in the nation. Yet, it

¹³Rose, GPD, p. 16.

¹⁴CHP, p. 597.

¹⁵"The Return of Democracy to Poland," Current History,
"The Return of Democracy to Poland," Christian Science

was not in his nature to regiment people politically or to impose uniformity of ideas on them. He was liberal in his policy, allowing as much political dissension as possible and would not tolerate action against the minorities in Poland.¹⁵ He had no true program. A writer in 1926 said of Pilsudski after he overthrew the Government:

The critics of General Pilsudski, and there are many, declare that he was able to seize control of Polish affairs merely because of his influence with the army and not because of any constructive ideas that he had set forth. They assert that he arrived at the helm with no plans of operation for the future and with no knowledge as to the proper negotiation of a ship of state. This is probably true, but the impression derived from conversations with him and the men he has put into office is that General Pilsudski himself is aware of these facts and makes no pretensions to the contrary. The motive behind the military move of May was unquestionably exasperation at the futility of the Government which was nominally in power at that time. The coup d'etat was not conceived for personal gain or aggrandisement. It was not inspired by any particular set of ideas. It was in fact merely the effective gesture of a man who had the power, making a protest against what he considered to be sacrifice of the best interests of his country to futile discussions.¹⁶

Pilsudski had one chief aim in foreign policy, and that was to prevent Poland from being repartitioned by Germany and Russia. He felt that this could be guaranteed only by a firm policy at home to maintain strength, a policy in international affairs of alliances with Germany and Russia to guarantee boundaries, and alliances with Roumania and France in case Poland should once again have to fight for liberty.¹⁷ The boldness and self-confidence of Pilsudski aided him in his foreign policy, for despite the newness of Poland and its undevelopment, Europe listened while Pilsudski was active.

¹⁵ CHP, pp. 596-597, 612-613.

¹⁶ J. D. Whelpley. "Pilsudski, Man of the Hour in Poland," Current History, XXV (December, 1926), 354.

¹⁷ K. Malecka and Godfrey Lias. "Sailorman Diplomat," Christian Science Monitor, (September 16, 1936), 3.

What might seem an exaggeration of some statesmen was accepted from Pilsudski as the word, for what he said he meant.¹⁸ This could be debated if one interpreted the statement to mean that Europe did what Pilsudski wanted. It probably only meant that Pilsudski was not necessarily regarded as a loud-mouthed minister of a second-rate Power. He stood for peace and co-operation, for without them, there was serious danger of Poland's once again becoming a "bone of contention." Pilsudski is quoted by Madame Pilsudska as saying that no one should ever think that Poland would remain on good terms with Germany or Russia unless she could defend herself against them both. Germany was not yet strong enough to make resentment over the Corridor; the Treaty with the Bolsheviki would hold only as long as Russia was unsure of herself. "When she is weak she is ready to promise anything," he said. "But she is equally ready to break those promises the moment she feels herself strong enough to do so."¹⁹

Pilsudski was regarded an amateur soldier by professional soldiers in Europe. He had studied military history and military science on his own, and most of it had been from the great wars of Napoleon. He also realized the special conditions in Eastern Europe and the "value of the material with which he had to deal." Many professionals laughed at his out-dated methods and his ancient materials. But Pilsudski's courage and his skill as a strategist and a tactician overcame those obstacles. Pilsudski was a born soldier who expected unquestionable obedience and wanted deeds, not words, when needed. He carried these characteristics with him all his life, through

¹⁸Reddaway, op. cit., pp. 295-296.

¹⁹Pilsudska, op. cit., p. 308.

military, political, and personal aspects. He was unable to free himself from the habit of secrecy, and of direct action.²⁰

Poland needed these qualities in her leader at such a critical time as the fight for her independence. Pilsudski may not have been the first to dream of a new Poland, but he realized it chiefly through his own character. A romantic in his ideals, he fought for them realistically.

No prejudice or illusion stood between him and his object. It was wholly independent; he received no theories at secondhand. He followed no masters, and learned from his own experience only, and from that accumulated experience...He was as single in mind as he was independent, and singleness of mind gave him a clearness of vision which enable him to foresee events in a manner, which seemed to his followers miraculous. His self-confidence was unbounded. To make a decision cost him an agony of thought, but when it was made he had no doubt of it.²¹

For Poland he was ambitious and was willing to sacrifice himself to that duty. He knew both how to command and to take risks for his cause. The force of his personality drew followers to him, for people are more willing to obey those who also serve for a cause. The hope of his idea was to unite all of Eastern Europe in a great federation, but it was not to be realized, for the purpose of this plan--to protect Eastern Europe against Germany and Russia--was never understood by many of the people.²² When his plan did not work, he worked for freedom of the minorities in their cultural activities in

²⁰Patterson, op. cit., p. 93; CHP, p. 593; Mizwa, op. cit., p. 365.

²¹CHP, p. 615.

²²Pilsudski planned for Poland to be the dominant Power. This was one of the reasons for misunderstanding and seems to be a justifiable reason.

²³Patterson, op. cit., pp. 57, 120-212, 125.

²⁴Hodgaway, op. cit., p. 319.

Poland in order that they might become good citizens. He had their support throughout his regime.²³

Pilsudski has been called outstanding but few call him great. In building Poland he achieved what only a great man could do, but his method of achieving that aim has been a source of criticism for the historian. "First a member of the Polish Socialist Party, then of the Fraction, then not a Socialist at all, now for the Central Powers, now for the Allies, long a bitter enemy of Powers with which he later made ententes, a democrat who abored the parliament until some thought him demented, and who led troops to drive the Premier from office..."²⁴ It was one of Pilsudski's attributes that he cared not whether he was outstanding or great. He was no pedant. He was a patriot working for an independent Poland, and he was willing to follow any course whether straight or zigzagged to reach his goal. To the Poles of the period between the two Wars, he was great; to the rest of the world--it mattered not to him. He gave up the opportunity for dictatorship because he realized it was not the best type of government for Poland. He probably realized that dictatorship most likely would not work in a nation divided into three sections which were not yet united in a true Polish national sense. After one hundred and fifty years of subjection to other nations, one could hardly expect those sections to emerge free from all influences of the nations of which they were a part. But it is amazing that after twenty years Poland had reached the status of a reasonably stable nation with a balanced budget, an army, a parliament and the power to have others join in good neighborly

²³Patterson. op. cit., pp. 67, 120-212, 125.

²⁴Reddaway, op. cit., p. 319.

relations with her. However, one critic of Pilsudski said that his achievements had their shortcomings and weaknesses, that he was not the sole liberator of Poland nor successful in every respect.²⁵ That is quite true, but he was a leader, and he was recognized as such by the Poles. Not only that, but he was an effective leader, and in Poland he was one of the greatest leaders they ever had.²⁶ The fact that he remained above any party system was a major aid. No one faction was, therefore, able to rule Poland. Paderewski was somewhat like Pilsudski in his patriotism, but he did not possess the political ability and knowledge of Pilsudski, which was necessary at such a critical time. *death cannot be laid on Pilsudski. The Colonels*

It can be said that the solutions of Pilsudski for Poland's problems have never been proved to be incorrect, and indications have shown that some of them were correct.²⁷ France now has a constitution similar to that of Poland in 1935. Plagued by the same problem of party factions, France was forced to resort to a constitution favoring a stronger executive. The fact that Pilsudski's plan has been followed by another country would certainly indicate that it was somewhat successful. History will never really know, however, what would have happened for two reasons. Pilsudski died too soon for any to know what would have been his next step in Poland. Secondly, the reign of the Colonels after Pilsudski's death cannot easily be weighed, for the situation in Europe was brewing for a Second World War. Poland was moving,

²⁵Mizwa, op. cit., p. 364.

²⁶Mizwa himself recognized these characteristics of Pilsudski after he had made his criticism of Pilsudski.

²⁷Reddaway, op. cit., p. 320.

in 1939, toward a more democratic pattern in a revolt against the Colonels, but the war interrupted its development. It may also have been that the Colonels allowed more democratic methods in Poland because of danger of the war and fear that the Polish people would resort to civil war if they were not allowed more freedom and thus provoke the start of a World War.

Pilsudski probably thought that the Colonels, men who had fought with him for Poland, would be as patriotic as he. If he realized that he was wrong before he died, it was probably already too late to make any changes, for he was getting quite ill and unable to appear in public. The blame for what happened after his death cannot be laid on Pilsudski. The Colonels exploited his prestige in order to stay in power and made it seem that what they were doing in Poland was according to the wishes of Pilsudski. But who can judge a man who followed such a zigzag pattern in his life except to say that from 1935 to 1939 he would have done what he thought was best for Poland.

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